







## **INTRODUCTION TO IRAN**



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INTRODUCTION TO  
IRAN



ELGIN GROSECLOSE



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**PART ONE**  
**THE PEOPLE AND THEIR LAND**

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## I

### THE LAND OF IRAN

TO DISCOVER the land of Iran on the map, one twirls the globe eastward, following the latitudes of Texas and California, or the South Atlantic States, through Gibraltar, the Mediterranean, and on east of Suez past the Arabian peninsula. Here Iran is found, bounded on the west by Iraq and Turkey, on the east by Afghanistan and British Baluchistan, while on the north lies the great political mass of Russia, like a slowly moving glacier pressing towards the warm waters of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea which enclose Iran on the south. Iran is politically an enclosed land, to which the commerce of the world has access, without passing through the territory of other sovereign powers, only through two deep-water ports of the Persian Gulf on the south.

Iran is the country formerly known as Persia, the people of which, twenty-five hundred years ago, commanded an empire that embraced Lybia and Egypt in Africa, Thrace, and Macedonia in Europe, and all the lands eastward to the Indus in India and the Oxus and Jaxartes in Central Asia. The word *Persia* applies properly only to the ancient province of Iran, which gave the empire its ruling race and its dominant culture and language. Modern Iran includes those areas which have remained essentially Persian in speech and culture, and to a large extent in race, and as such it may be classed as one of the oldest national existences in history.

Modern Iran is still a vast territory of 628,000 square miles. This is an area equal to that of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California combined, and the population is roughly equivalent to that of these states (approximately 16,000,000). The landscape and climate offer general resemblances to those of the American Southwest. There are the elevated plateaus, the vast stretches of empty land, ringed by silent, awe-inspiring ranges; there are salt deserts and imperial valleys rich in fruits

and produce, and in a few districts forests and jungles. The air is generally dry and bracing; the extremes of temperature are about the same. There is the same 'wind along the waste'—and it may be mentioned that the windmill, so common on the Great Plains, was first known in Iran. But Iran is more arid, more desolate, and has greater expanses of desert. Grazing and tillage by irrigation are characteristic of both.

The greater part of Iran is a vast plateau, or more properly a series of high valleys lying between mountain ranges, which also form a wall around the country, save on the east. The elevation of this tableland varies from 3,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level, while the mountains reach a height, in Mt. Demavend, of 18,602 feet. On the south the elevation drops sharply to a sterile sea-level coast along the Persian Gulf; on the southwest occurs an equally abrupt descent to the arid plains of Iraq; on the north the land drops to below sea level, where it meets the Caspian Sea,<sup>1</sup> in a region of luxuriant subtropical forest. On the east the elevation continues to mount until it reaches, in central Asia, the immense altitudes of the Hindu Kush and Himalayas. In southeastern Iran is a vast expanse of desert known as the Dasht-i-Kavir and the Dasht-i-Lut. The Dasht-i-Lut is one of the most sterile regions of the globe, an area of sand and salt marshes inhabited by neither bird, nor beast, nor reptile, and by not even the most audacious desert herb.<sup>2</sup>

The ascent to the Iranian tableland is an experience to enthral even the most experienced voyager. The traveler leaves the plains and climbs up escarpments by trails so precipitous that in the Persian tongue they are called *kotal*, or ladders. He traverses mountain ranges of terrifying ruggedness and majestic grandeur; he passes the ruins of ancient cities by roads that were followed by Alexander and Darius and Marco Polo; he follows gorges, walled by rocky precipices shimmering in an ochre and purple mist, divided by the water foaming white

<sup>1</sup> The level of the Caspian Sea is 85 feet below 'sea level.'

<sup>2</sup> No meteorological observations have been made in the desert itself, but data gathered at neighboring stations indicate that the prevailing humidity is between 5 and 15 per cent. The word applied to this district, *Lut*, signifying the 'Land of Lot,' connotes its terrifying desolation.

between; but everywhere he views chiefly barrenness and desolation.

Yet such is the mystery of Nature that her most precious gifts are to be found in these seemingly barren wastes. The mountains serve the beneficent purpose of reservoirs, holding the moisture that descends as snow in winter, and releasing it as the advancing sun of summer melts it and sends it in rivulets down onto the plain, where it activates the rich soil and produces garden oases of unbelievable charm. From a distance, the oases, surrounded by sun-dried mud walls, above which the poplars wave their foliage, resemble jade and coral upon the ochre expanse: one approaches them with a sense of anticipation and excitement and mystery. Here is a spot in which to rest and enjoy a moment of solitary paradise amid the wastes. The nomads and the villagers, if wary at first, are quickly hospitable, and the traveler will be offered for refreshment *lawash*, or thin strips of whole wheat bread, of remarkable delicacy of flavor, goat's milk cheese, nut meats and raisins, and a delectable preparation of milk, known as *mast*, together with wild honey, *doshab* or grape sirup, and *sherbet*, or sweetened fruit sirup.

All the produce of the temperate zone burgeons in these gardens. The grapes—over fifty varieties may be found in a single vineyard, ranging from the sugar sweet *kishmish*, small as the tip of the little finger, to the massive *sahebi*, large as a man's thumb—are famous: ancient Persian tradition has it that here originated the art of making wine, which in old Persian is known as the 'sweet poison.' And the Bible tells of how Noah, descending from Ararat into what is now Azerbaijan, set out a vineyard, and, drunk with the wine, became the first inebriate in history.<sup>3</sup>

The modern Persians, who do not as a rule drink wine, have a way of hanging grape clusters from rafters so that they retain their juices throughout the winter. Sun-dried, they are exported as raisins, and it was from the grape cultures of Shiraz, transported by the Arabs to Spain, in medieval times, that the Sherry-wine industry was founded.

Wheat is grown in most districts of Iran, sufficient to meet

<sup>3</sup> Genesis ix: 20, 21.

the demands of the population, for whom it constitutes a staple of diet, and to provide a small surplus for export. About 80 per cent of the cultivated land is devoted to wheat and barley. Rice is also cultivated, and connoisseurs assert that no finer rice is grown than the Persian. Certainly, perfectly prepared as it is in Iran, with each grain separate and the whole light and fluffy, it makes a dish to entice the appetite even without the numerous sauces with which it is served.

Among the fruits and nuts which are produced in abundance are apricots, peaches, cherries, quinces, almonds, walnuts, and pistachios. Nuts are exported in considerable quantities.

Proverbial are the flowers, and justly celebrated in song. To the Persians we owe not only the names but probably the flowers themselves: rose, jasmine, lilac, narcissus, myrtle. The secret of pressing the oil from the rose was a Persian discovery, and the name of this oil, *attar*, is also Persian.

The melons too must be mentioned. Long before motor transport, caravans laden with melons of Isfahan wended northward to Teheran, a distance of 250 miles, and in recent years varieties have been brought to this country for propagation. The soil and climate of Iran is, however, so peculiarly adapted to their culture that only in Iran itself can the perfection of their flavor be tasted. The way of keeping melons, by bedding them in straw, together with the qualities of the Iranian climate, permits them to be served late in winter with all their original freshness preserved.

Everywhere, except along the northern coast, rainfall is scanty. On the eastern tableland the rain seldom exceeds 8 inches annually and on the western tableland averages 15 inches—about the same as in Salt Lake City. In the Lut, the rainfall does not exceed 2 inches.

Except in the Caspian lowlands, where mosquitoes are a danger, and the Persian Gulf littoral, the climate is healthful. On the tableland the weather resembles that of Iowa, Nebraska, and the Dakotas, except for the lesser rainfall. In winter, temperatures are low, although they seldom drop below zero. In summer they average between 70 and 90 degrees, sometimes soaring above 100, but the effect of such extreme temperature is modified by the dryness of the atmosphere. The range of

temperature varies of course according to the altitude, and in the mountains the variations are extreme.<sup>4</sup>

In the south, along the Persian Gulf, where during World War II so many Americans of the Persian Gulf Command worked at unloading war material for transportation to Russia, the heat is unbearable, reaching as high as 123 degrees at times.<sup>5</sup> In the north, also, in the provinces bordering on the Caspian, the climate becomes subtropical, and as rainfall is heavy, luxuriant forests are found. These dense forests are called in Persian, *jāngal*, from which the English 'jungle' is derived.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, from the leg wrappings which the natives of Gilan and Mazanderan wear as protection against the brambles, and which they call *paitava*, or *paitwa*, has come, by way of India and the British Indian Army, the English 'puttee.'

Besides unnumbered oases and villages nestled at the feet of the ranges, there are, at what were formerly enormous intervals of distance and time, cities of distinctive appearance, of fascinating interest, and formerly of considerable importance in world trade. The principal cities are: Teheran, the capital and the largest, with a population estimated in 1940 at 540,000; Tabriz, a great emporium in Marco Polo's time and today the second city, with a population of approximately 215,000; Isfahan (population, 205,000), of which a proverb says, 'Half the world is Isfahan'; Meshed, holy city and center of pilgrimage (population 175,000); Shiraz, birthplace of Hafiz and Sa'di (population 130,000); Resht, center of the silk industry (pop-

<sup>4</sup> In Teheran, the range of the monthly average high temperature for a 22-year period was from 44° in January to 99° in July; the average low temperature for this period ranged from 27° in January to 72° in July. The maximum recorded temperature was 109°, the minimum recorded was 4° below.—W. W. Reed, *Temperatures in Asia*, U. S. Weather Bureau, 1931.

<sup>5</sup> The temperature at Abadan over a 10-year period ranged between an average high and low of 113° and 81° for August, and an average high and low of 65° and 47° for January. Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Or its Sanskrit equivalent. *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives the origin of *jungle* as Sanskrit *jāngal*, meaning waste, desert, dry. Since the Persian *jāngal* refers only to forest, and since Persian was the official language of the government of India from Mongol times until the middle of the nineteenth century, it is more likely that the English word was derived from the Persian.



ulation 120,000); and Hamadan, a rug-weaving center (population 105,000).

These are the only cities larger than 100,000 population. Remote from each other as these cities were before the advent of motor highways and railways, they manifest characteristics that are found in no other land, a similarity of aspect and composition that testify to a common inspiration and to the unity of the culture that produced them. Characteristic of them are the miles of arcaded streets, known as bazaars, in the dim aisles of which, protected from the heat in summer and from the cold in winter, the varied trade and handicraft of the East are conducted; the mosques without number, with turquoise domes and imposing high-vaulted gateways, covered with faïence of indescribable intricacy of design; and always a great public square, or *maidan*, the most famous of which, that of Isfahan, was renowned in the England of Shakespeare's day and is still the largest public square in the world, with the exception of the Kremlin.

On the trade routes that connected these cities, in earlier times passed immense caravans of camels, several hundred in a single line, coupled in queues of six or seven, their bridles and harnesses ornamented with turquoise to ward off the Evil Eye, and hung with many bells, the tinkling of which made haunting music in the silences of the wastes. Upon their backs was borne the prize merchandise of the East—silks and carpets and spices—and in late modern times such bulky articles as pianos and glass chandeliers to grace the houses of the rich.

At stages along the route were inns for man and beast, caravanserais built in a square about a courtyard, in which the merchandise unloaded from the camels was protected from thievery and pillage, while the camels, brought to kneel outside, resembled at night dark hummocks on the plain. The erection and maintenance of these caravanserais were often the concern of shahs and princes, for the Persians have always been a principal trading people, and the merchant a highly regarded member of society. Many of the caravanserais, especially those built by the great Shah Abbas, a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth, still exist, some still used and others standing as ruins to evoke sad contemplation:

Think, in this batter'd Caravanseraï  
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,  
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp  
Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.

Today, air transportation across the great spaces of these uplands takes no more in hours than the caravans required in weeks, and from the transport plane can be seen the ancient trails threading their way across the plain and among the mountains. But now upon them the patient camel line is seldom seen; rather, motorcars and trucks and wayside garages take the place of battered caravanserais, and to the *bul bul*, the Persian nightingale, which sings in the gardens by night, must now be added the *bulbul rang*, which is the Persian way of saying 'ball bearing,' which sings a new song upon the wastes.

The motorcar and truck, and the railroad that now pierces and gashes the mountains on its way north from the Persian Gulf have brought a new aspect to the country, without changing its essential character. In the cities, broad avenues cut like a knife through the maze of winding streets, and along them automobiles stand parked bumper to bumper. Modern houses with glass windows and open terraces now display what was formerly concealed by high walls of sun-dried mud; the covered bazaars are giving way to modern store fronts of plate glass, behind which are arranged the curious wares of the West. The people wear European dress, and they listen to *Radio Teheran* giving forth the newest dance music and the latest dispatches from the capitals of the West. But a few miles away, life is still undisturbed by the march of civilization. The peasants plow their fields as their ancestors did; upon the hillsides the nomads pitch their black tents and follow their flocks in search for grass, as did Abraham and Lot and the sons of Jacob.

## II

### THE PEOPLE

#### A. THE ARYANS

THE WORD 'Iran' means 'Land of the Aryans.' The Aryans were the people from whom were derived the language, culture, and ethnic characteristics of most of the peoples of Europe. It is in Iran that the Aryans first appeared in history as a people of definable racial, linguistic, and cultural identity. The Iranian tableland, with its extensions, was one of their earliest homelands, and may have been their original homeland. The first knowledge of them, in pre-history, was of their appearance in Iran some two thousand years before Christ. Where they came from is still an unsolved question, but the most recent research indicates that it was not from far—from around the Caspian, either in what is now Khorasan and Turkestan, or the Russian Caucasus, and possibly the Crimea. They came into historical notice when they settled in the valleys and plains of the Zagros Mountains on the borders of the Sumerian, the Babylonian, and the Assyrian empires. They appeared at intervals and in several groups, among the best known of which are the Medes and the Persians. Another branch had moved down into India to become the Brahmins of that country. Though anthropologists classify the prehistoric Aryans as a 'warrior' people, from the custom of barrow-burial with the battle axe and drinking beaker, the Aryans who appeared in Iran did not come as conquerors, for it is known that they crossed to the eastern side of the Zagros to avoid conflict with the Urartu, who lived around Mt. Ararat. They seem to have come very much as the later settlers of the American West, looking for new land and opportunity, bringing with them their herds and their families and their household gear laden in horse-drawn or oxen-drawn covered wagons.

*Racial Characteristics*

The kinship of culture between the Aryans of Iran and the Americans is indicated by similarities of language and the familiar ring of many Persians words: *padar* corresponds to 'father'; *mader* and *barader* to 'mother' and 'brother,' *do* is 'two,' and *shesh* is 'six.' The Aryans of Iran are generally of darker pigmentation than is common here, but their ethnic characteristic is closer to the Nordic mean than to that of the normal Mediterranean type.<sup>1</sup> Similarities will be found in the tendency to sparseness, in the long heads, the level eyes, high foreheads and narrow (leptorrhine) noses of the pure Persian and the typical American or Englishman. Similarities of temperament are particularly noticeable between the nomadic Aryans of Iran (who have preserved in greatest purity the ancient Aryan characteristics) and the frontier Aryans of the American West. A love of horses, dexterity in their management, and a capacity for long hours in the saddle<sup>2</sup> characterize both. Hospitality, amiability, quickness of wit, a droll, sometimes rather dry, humor—not to overlook a common tendency for the 'tall story'—are traits that are also familiar among both. A love for the open spaces, a fondness for design and embroidery, a great reverence for the mystic and unseen powers of the Universe, and, formerly, a great preoccupation with questions of sin and human destiny: all these mark the disposition.

There are others that might be mentioned, though parallelism begins to part: a common addiction to hot drink—in one case, tea; in the other, coffee—but not to hard liquor, which is unfamiliar and forbidden among the Persians;<sup>3</sup> an ancient regard for chastity and the sanctity of the home, defended on the Great Plains by the traditional buck-loaded shotgun and among the settled Aryans of Iran by the institution of the *andirun*, the veil and the high wall.

<sup>1</sup> See Coon, Carleton Stevens, *The Races of Europe*, New York, 1939, pp. 418 ff.

<sup>2</sup> An Iranian army colonel of my acquaintance told me that as a youth he rode every week end from Teheran to Kasvin and back in visiting his betrothed. Kasvin is 96 miles distant from Teheran.

<sup>3</sup> Wine is celebrated by the Persian poets, despite the Koranic interdiction to its use.

They were great horse breeders, the early Aryans of Iran, the earliest peoples in history to employ the horse for drawing wagons, and it was from them that the civilizations of Sumeria and Babylonia became acquainted with its use. They were also the first 'cow punchers' of history. Their Gathic hymns speak highly of the herd and herdsman, and in India today the cow is sacred to the Brahmins. They were also addicted to cattle 'rustling,' as the art of pillage is called in the Southwest, and it was against this practice that Zoroaster, their first great prophet and teacher, devoted much of his preaching, urging the people to take up agriculture and husbandry instead of seeking excitement and spoil in rapine.

The Aryans, though perhaps not the inventors of the wheel, must be identified with its early development for it is after their appearance that the wheel in its various applications became a familiar implement of civilization.<sup>4</sup> They made of the wheel what the Egyptians made of the lever, a principal tool of culture and a symbol of the moral order, and in the movement of the wheel in history may be traced the underlying influence of the Aryan spirit in human culture. *Charkh* it is called in Persian, and *car*, *cart*, *chariot*, *caravel*, and *carousel* are its variants in English. It is found engraved upon the foot of Buddha as the symbol of eternal existence, and in the mechanical civilization of the West it has become the key to mortal existence, employed to capture the essence of time, to conquer the distances of space, to grind our bread and to clothe our backs. The first-known highways for wheeled traffic were the 'royal' roads built by Darius the Persian.

<sup>4</sup> The origin of the wheel is a question on which archaeology as yet offers inconclusive evidence. On a painted vase, excavated in the lowest strata of Tell Halaf, in northwestern Mesopotamia, is to be seen what, if usual interpretation is correct, is the earliest known picture of a chariot. The chariot has great eight-spoked wheels and carries a man. The Tell Halaf site comprises remains from several archaeological periods, the earliest of which had its beginnings well back in the fifth millennium B.C. (Finegan, Jack, *Light from the Ancient Past*, Princeton, 1946, p. 15.) From a cemetery at Ur, in southern Mesopotamia, dating probably around 2500 B.C., was found by C. Leonard Woolley in 1934 a wooden panel on which is clearly represented four-wheeled chariots drawn by what appears to be horses. The chariot wheels are solid rather than spoked. (Ibid. p. 35 and Fig. 16.)

*Moral and Social Traditions*

The early Aryans that settled the Iranian uplands, like their later kinsmen of the American frontier, were a restless, roving people; but they were not a rootless people, blown like tumbleweed before the wind. They were a home- and family-loving people, and they were soon accustomed to tillage and the settled ways of civilization. There is some basis for believing that they were the first wheat growers. Their songs, which have come down to us in the Vedic hymns of the Sanskrit, speak of 'stabled cattle' and of 'grass piles' and 'autumn harvests,' and give us a picture of farm life and hamlets, a people who prepared their grain for food with 'grinding stones of the mill.' There are references also to 'kith and kin,' to 'wife and child and home,' in the same nostalgic accents as a cowboy lament; and we hear of 'kings and chiefs,' of 'anointed priests' and 'physicians and healing medicine,' from which we know they were not a primitive people, but one that had reached a high level of social organization at this early period in their history.

Here is their concept of the ideal life, as described in their religious books:

It is where one of the faithful erects a house with a priest within, with cattle, with a wife, with children, and good herds within; and where the cattle continue to thrive, virtue to thrive, fodder to thrive, the dog to thrive, the wife to thrive, the child to thrive, the fire to thrive, and every blessing of life to thrive. It is where one of the faithful cultivates most corn, grass, and fruit; where he waters ground that is dry, or drains ground that is too wet.<sup>5</sup>

They were a devout people, too, these early Aryans, who looked up to one God, 'heaven-dwelling father'—*dya-pitar*, or Jupiter, as he was later known to the Romans. There is something especially significant in this, in the idealism and sense of mission which is found alike in the man of the West and pioneer traditions, and this older kinsman, the Aryan of the Persian uplands of thirty-five to forty centuries ago. They sensed the mystery of sin, and looked to their God to deliver them from its clutches. We may imagine that among their camps and settled habitations, as among the villages

<sup>5</sup> *The Vendidad*, Fargard III.

and rural districts of our West, the voice of the evangelist and itinerant preacher was often heard, lifted in honor of the heavenly Father, calling upon men to war against the forces of evil and darkness.

For this we know, that time and again in history have issued from these uplands and these people great seers and prophets proclaiming new revelations and calling men to a new righteousness, and founding religious systems that were more than local, extending far beyond the land of Iran and which, in instances, have profoundly influenced European religious thought: Zoroaster, Mani, Mazdak; and in modern times the Bab and Baha-Ullah, are among the best known.

### *First Aryan Kingdoms*

From the eighth century, B.C., through the sixth, the Aryans developed increasingly as a military force and state. Among the several Aryan tribes or groups that had settled on the plateau and among the mountains of Iran were the Medes and the Persians. The Medes occupied the regions of what are now Kurdistan and Azerbaijan, on the borders of the Assyrian Empire, the capital of which was at Nineveh, near modern Mosul. The Persians settled farther south, in what is now the province of Fars. The Medes established a kingdom with its capital at Ecbatana (now identified as modern Hamadan) and in 606 (612?) B.C., in alliance with the Babylonians, attacked Assyria. The ferocity of this assault, in which the horse and the wheel first appear in history as major instruments of warfare, is described in the Bible:

The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses.\*

Nineveh fell, and the empire of the Assyrians disappeared from history. Meantime, the Persians, until then a subordinate branch of the Aryans, had been growing in power, and within 56 years from the fall of Nineveh they established their ascendancy over the Medes. The kingship passed to a Persian family

\* Nahum III: 2 and 3.

known as the Achaemenians; the capital was transferred from Ecbatana to Persepolis, and the kingdom was now known as that of the Medes and Persians. Under a line of Achaemenian kings, among whom the names of Cyrus I, Cambyses I, Cyrus the Great, Cambyses II, Darius, and Xerxes still awaken the imagination, the kingdom became an empire exceeding that of the Roman in extent. The language of the land now became that of the Persians; the country itself came to be known as Persia; and though the Persian Empire lasted for only two hundred years, it fixed a national tradition that has persisted throughout subsequent vicissitudes and remains a living stream of national consciousness, nourishing and activating the spirit of the people of Iran today with a sense of their cultural and political unity.

### *The First 'Great One'*

This cultural tradition, this national spirit of the Persian Aryans, its peculiar and distinctive features, and the qualities and characteristics of the people, may best be explained by reference to certain great personalities that have appeared at intervals in the history of the land. The greatest of them—greater than Cyrus or Darius, one to rank with Moses and Elias and Mohammed as lawgiver, prophet, and teacher—was Zoroaster, purifier of the ancient Magian faith, founder of Zoroastrianism.

We do not know a great deal about the man Zoroaster, and for many years scholars doubted his historic existence. It seems fairly certain now that he was born in what is now Rizayeh (formerly Urmiah) in northwestern Iran, about 660 B.C., and died about 583 B.C.<sup>7</sup> This was some hundred years later than the Hebrew Isaiah, a hundred years before the Hindu Buddha, and two hundred years before the Greek philosopher Socrates, and at a period in Iranian history when the first great Aryan kingdom, that of the Medes, was in the ascendancy.

Like Isaiah and Socrates, Zoroaster perceived the great fact that the essential problem of the universe was that of sin, and that God could be approached only by the soul that is pure. Evil was not to be propitiated by offerings to the spirit of dark-

<sup>7</sup> Some modern scholars now lean to a date between 580 B.C. and 510 B.C.



ness. Man was a creature of dignity and worth, and the duty of man was to wage war, under the banner of Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Great Knowledge, upon all the forces of darkness, until the blessed day, at the end, when eternal goodness would triumph, and Ahura Mazda would reign in peace over heaven and earth.

Such also was the exaltation of Zoroaster's inspiration that he taught the resurrection of the dead, the immortality of the soul, and the heavenly Paradise, or 'Abode of Song.' It is believed by some scholars that these ideas first appeared in Hebrew thought as a result of contact with Zoroastrianism during the Babylonian Captivity.

### *Kings and Conquerors*

As Zoroaster manifests the capacity for spiritual exaltation of these Perso-Aryans, so in certain great ones of war and dominion are exhibited qualities of another sort, qualities not unfamiliar in the civilizations of the West. Of Cyrus and Darius and Ahasuerus, or Xerxes—we have vivid pictures in the Bible, and on the uplands of Iran the solid but forlorn vestiges of their majesty. It was Cyrus the Great who with broad tolerance returned the Jews of the Captivity to their homes and aided in the rebuilding of their temple. It was Ahasuerus who made the Jewish Esther his queen. It was Darius who built Persepolis, regarded as among the most ambitious and awe-inspiring works of architecture, the ruins of which, standing in their lonely grandeur on the Persian wastes, still lure the traveler and sadden him with contemplation of the futility of greatness and the transitoriness of fame:

The Palace that to Heav'n his pillars threw,  
The Kings the forehead on his threshold drew—  
I saw the solitary Ringdove there,  
And 'Coo, coo, coo,' she cried; and 'Coo, coo, coo.'

It was Darius whom, the Bible tells, the prophet Daniel served as counselor, and who condemned Daniel to the lion's den for the decree he had made and could not revoke, because of 'the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not.' And it was this Darius who with the arrogance of a Caesar caused to be smoothed off the face of the mountain Bisitun, and to

be carved upon it the glories of his reign—and with the humility of a Lincoln to attribute these glories to the grace of Ahura Mazda, his protector. It is an enormous tablatore, three hundred feet above the plain—columns of cuneiform writing, so carefully executed, so cunningly glazed, that they stand today in their original freshness after twenty-five centuries. Above the writing is an image of the Great King, majestic as he stands before his throne, shielded by a parasol, his left hand holding a bow, his right hand raised in pronouncement of sentence, his visage fierce and awesome. Before him stand the kings of the earth in chains, whom he has made captive, and above him is the symbol of his God, Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Righteousness. The inscription recites the names of the kings and the countries the Great King has conquered, recounts the blessings of his reign, and admonishes his posterity against Ahriman, the Lie, and, again and again, acknowledges the sovereignty of Ahura Mazda. But first of all, the strong racial pride of his kind:

I am Darius the King, the King of Kings, the Great King of the provinces, the son of Hystaspes, the grandson of Arsames, the Achæmenian. From antiquity have we descended; from antiquity those of our race have been kings

Such was the majesty of the Great King Darius.

By the grace of Ahura Mazda I have become king of them: Persia, Susiana, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt; those which are of the sea, Sparta and Ionia, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Zarangia, Asia, Chorasnia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandara, the Sacae, the Satagydes, Arachotia, and Mecia, in all, twenty-two countries.

There is much else, besides, done by me [says the Great King], which is not written in this inscription; on this account is it not written, lest that which I have done may seem exaggerated to him who shall hereafter read this inscription, and may not appear to him true and may seem to him to be a Lie.

And if this seems proud and boastful, recall that nowhere does Darius attribute his success to any other than the grace and protection of God. Neither with Cyrus nor Darius, or in the later generations of Persian kings and emperors, do we find that which the early Christians combated in the Roman

world—the assumption of godhead—*Caesar divus*. And although it is generally reported that the deification of kings was something Alexander the Great found in Persia and introduced to the West, it is a fact that there were no altars to the Persian kings; there were no oblations offered to them: they might be kings, but they were not God.<sup>8</sup>

'A great God is Ahura Mazda,' says Darius in his Susa inscription, 'who created this earth, who has created that heaven, who has created man, who has created good things for man, who has made Darius king, unique king of many, sole commander of many.'

And though in later Iranian history, much that is dark and depressing must be written of the absolutism of the monarchy, the foul deeds of kings, and the pitiful debasement of their subjects, yet this sense of moral responsibility and of accountability of man to God, and the ancient Aryan tradition of human dignity, persist, like a ray of candlelight in a cavern, and to them may be attributed in part the fact that in the twentieth century Iran was the first of the lands east of the Nile to rise in democratic fervor, depose its monarch, and establish a constitutional and parliamentary political system.

Of Shapur, who defeated and held captive the Roman Emperor Valerian (A.D. 260); of Shah Abbas the Great (1587-1629), contemporary of Queen Elizabeth, who made Isfahan 'half the world' and erected the caravanserais one still sees throughout the country; of Nadir Shah, who conquered India in 1738 and brought home spoil estimated at nearly \$500,000,000 value, including the famous gold and gem-encrusted Peacock Throne, only mention may be made. They were conquerors, but their conquests did not equal in extent those of Cyrus and Darius, nor did they display those personal attributes of greatness and dignity history associates with the Achaemenians. The characteristic quality of these later Iranian rulers may be illustrated by the story told by Sir Thomas Herbert, who spent some years in the court of Shah Abbas. The king, he recounts, was hunting one day, and seeing something stir in the grass he sent a

<sup>8</sup> Later dynasties of kings, down to Moslem times, took the title 'whose lineage is from the gods' in imitation of the apotheosis of Hellenistic kings, but claims to godhead were perfunctory, and not in the national tradition or belief.

shaft into it, only to discover that he had shot a peasant who had curled up for a nap. As he rode on he remarked, 'I did the man no wrong; I found him sleeping, and asleep I left him.'

### *The Poets*

Along with prophets and seers, and monarchs whose names in their times have caused generations of men to tremble, must be mentioned geniuses of another cast, singers of sweet songs and composers of martial epics. Chief of these is Firdausi (935-1020), who stands among the immortals with Homer and Vergil, and Dante and Shakespeare, and in some ways is more distinguished than any of these. Firdausi is the author of the epic poem, the *Shah Namah*, or 'Chronicles of the Kings,' which was completed in A.D. 999 and it is his distinction that his verses are still recited, after over nine hundred years, around campfires and in the bazaars by wandering troubadours, in the tongue in which they were composed; and even unlettered porters can quote couplets from his sonorous cantos. For Firdausi fixed the Persian language as it may be said that the King James version of the Bible fixed the structure of the English language; and modern Persian is nearer to the Persian of Firdausi than modern English is to the English of Chaucer. Such, moreover, is Firdausi's renown, and the esteem in which he is held throughout the world, that the millennium of his birth was celebrated in London, in Paris, and in New York, with expositions and ceremonies.

And there are others, whose names will only be mentioned here, that are read in English in translation: Omar, Hafiz, Sa'di, Jalal-ed-Din Rumi, Nizami, Jami.\*

And thus, as exemplars of the Perso-Aryan genius, we have a list of names that include prophets and seers to rank with those of the Old Testament; monarchs and conquerors remembered like Alexander and the Roman Caesars; poets whose songs are sung in many languages. And in this diffuse and variant florescence one may observe the stature and breadth of the Aryan spirit as it expanded in the Iranian uplands.

\* *The Thousand Nights and a Night*, sometimes called the *Arabian Nights Entertainment*, familiar to every child, is a collection of Persian tales brought into Arabic literature and thence into English.



Africa to the Pyrenees in Spain. In return they left the Persians a book—the Koran. This book is written in Arabic, a language unrelated to Persian and belonging to the Semitic group, which includes Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac. Of the influence of that book more will be said later, but it may be remarked here that its influence was greatly to affect the vocabulary of the Persian language (though not its structure), with the result that probably half the words in common use today are of Arabic extraction. Arabs today populate the southwestern plains of Iran (Khuzistan) and the southern seacoasts, where they live as growers of dates and as fishers.

### *Turanian Invaders*

Repeatedly, from the ninth through the fourteenth centuries, Iran suffered from incursions of various Turanian peoples from the East, of whom the principal were the Seljuk Turks, the Mongols, and the Tartars. By the Mongol Genghis Khan (1162-1227) and the Tartar Tamerlane (1335-1405), the land was devastated, cities were razed, and vast pyramids of human skulls erected. Mongol and Tartar khanates and overlords were established in various parts of Iran, and their followers settled in the land. Today, in a belt across northern Iran, the Turanian element can be observed in the racial types, and in Turki-speaking villages and communities. In northwest Iran (Azerbaijan), Turki is the common language of speech, though it is not written, and all written communications are in Persian (Farsi). Turki is linguistically unrelated to Farsi, but belongs to the Ural-Altaic group which includes Turkish, Finnish, Magyar, and the Mongol tongues of Central Asia.

The Turanian influence did not modify the main stream of Persian culture and tradition. Indeed, there occurred during this period an artistic and literary florescence comparable to that of the Renaissance in Europe. It was during this period that the mosque of Gauhar Shad in Meshed was built, regarded by some as the finest piece of mosque architecture to be found anywhere; that Firdausi composed his national epic, and Persian poetry found its finest expression in the works of Sa'di (b. 1176), Jalal-ed-Din Rumi (1207-73), Hafiz, and Jami (d. 1492); and that the philosophical system known as Sufism developed.

In addition to the ethnic grouping by linguistic affinities, presented above, a classification by religion, occupational tradition, and by geography is necessary for an understanding of the present composition of the Iranian people. The principal stock is, of course, the Persian-speaking Aryans, descendants of the ancient Medes, Persians, Parthians, and other Aryan peoples. These Persians are found in villages and towns throughout the central plateau. They provide the dominant culture, the language, and the political cohesion of the country. The least-mixed Persians are found in the province of Fars, the ancient Pars or Parsua, where they originally settled, and from where the language of the country, Farsi, derives its name. The land of the Medes, who were also of Aryan stock, was principally what is now modern Azerbaijan, the fertile region of the northwest lying around Lake Urmiah. It is the *Arayana Vaego*, or the Old Iran, of the Avestic writings; later it became a seat of government of the Mongols and is today colored by Mongoloid types. The language commonly spoken here is Turki.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Kurds*

In the mountain ranges that fringe the country on the west and in the ranges and uplands of the east are various tribal or racial groupings, of ancient lineage, which form an important element in the national characteristic, though culturally their contribution has been relatively negligible. The people most famous in legend and story are the Kurds, and they may be mentioned first. Darius lists them among the peoples he subdued; they are the Carduchi of the *Anabasis*, whom Xenophon and his Ten Thousand encountered on their adventurous return to Greece after serving as mercenaries in the armies of Cyrus II (c. 401 B.C.). The great Saladin of the days of the Crusades, familiar to readers of Scott's *Talisman*, was a Kurd. The Kurds range from the slopes of Mount Ararat in the north, southward as far as Hamadan and Kermanshah in the ranges of the Zagros Mountains. They are herdsmen of

<sup>10</sup> This is the area that Russia continued to occupy after World War II, and where an autonomous 'republic' was fomented on the ground that Azerbaijan was not really Persian in speech or culture and had no vital connection with the rest of the country.

sheep and goats and they are migratory with the season, though many among them have adopted settled life, living in villages of dried mud houses in which livestock are stabled with their owners. They are independent, and resentful of control by others than their tribal chiefs. Dwelling as they do on the boundaries of Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Soviet Armenia, they find it easy to pass from the territory of one to that of another as occasion demands, and consequently they have never been under more than nominal control by any of these sovereignties.

The racial origins of the Kurds are obscure, but they are probably of Aryan stock. Their language, while distinct, is related to Persian, with a large admixture, however, of Arabic and Turkish. In appearance they are distinct from the typical Persian, being stocky, with aquiline features, strong noses, dark eyes with beetling brows, and generally swarthy complexions. Their women have never veiled; they are handsome, vivacious, and good humored. The men are often bloodthirsty, and fond of depredations upon their more sedentary neighbors.

The Kurds in Iran number probably five hundred thousand. In the sixteenth century Shah Abbas transported a colony of them to Khorasan, in northeastern Iran, as wardens of the marches, and they constitute today a sizable element in that district.

### *Lurs and Bakhtiariis*

Dwelling to the south of the Kurds, and in the same Zagros range, are important tribal groups, probably descendants of ancient Aryan stock, of whom the principal are the Lurs and the Bakhtiariis.<sup>11</sup> The Feili, or Little Lurs, live in the region of Kermanshah, through which one passes in following the ancient Darian highway from the Persian plateau down to Baghdad; farther south and east are the Bakhtiariis, the Mammassani, and the Kuhgeluhje, sometimes grouped as the Great Lurs. The Bakhtiariis graze their flocks in a region of rich oil deposits, the discovery of which, early in the century, produced major modifications in their tribal life and customs.

The chiefs of the tribes received substantial blocks of stock

<sup>11</sup> The Bakhtiariis lack some of the ethnic characteristics of the Irano-Afghan, being generally brachiocephalic. (Coon, op. cit.)



in the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, which exploits the area, and retired to the ease of Teheran, where their sons became scholars and gentlemen and amiable conversationalists, as well as patriotic servants of the government. Many of the tribesmen accepted employment with the oil company in their favorite occupation of riding the range, now as guardians rather than as disturbers of the peace, and many others have learned the lucrative craft of oil-well drilling.

Still, the migratory habits did not disappear, and twice yearly the tribes strike their tents, load their babies and household gear on the backs of donkeys, round up their flocks of goats and fat-tailed sheep, and set off in search of greener pastures. In the spring, they go northward, from the Mesopotamian plains of Khuzistan to the mountain slopes and valleys of the Zagros. In the autumn, when the grass is turning red and brown, and the mountain peaks become shrouded with a pall of gray, and as the first snow flakes begin to fall in the upper passes, they return to Khuzistan.

The trek northward in spring is especially hazardous and calls for the highest courage and perseverance. The snows in the mountains are now melting; rivers are bankfull, and the gorges are like millraces, foaming with whitish spume. The tribesmen do not carry boats with them: these torrents must be crossed by fording, or, in the broader, deeper channels, by a device as ancient as the oldest inscriptions on the rock walls: primitive rafts of inflated sheepskin. By human lung power the empty skins are filled with air; they are tied together; household gear, babies, the infirm, lambs and kids are piled upon them while the men, swimming alongside, push them to the farther bank. Beyond the rushing waters are still greater hazards. In the mountain passes lie the fields of snow. Up these the tribes plod, driving the flocks ahead of them—from a distance they resemble a line of ants on the dazzling snow expanse. Up rocky escarpments, where footing is held by hand and toe thrust into the crevices, they inch their way, carrying the young of man and beast upon their shoulders. Only the hardy and the young survive: the infirm, who will not be left behind, fall by the wayside, for like the seagull beating against the lighthouse, they are driven by an inner urge and an outward fascination, and by the inexorable demand of their way

of livelihood—pasturage for their flocks, grassy terraces for their tents—and they are stayed only by the exhaustion of physical energy.

Fortunately for the edification of civilized man, to whom too often heroism is something to be captured only on the field of battle, a record of these journeys has been preserved by a party of intrepid cameramen and writers in the motion picture *Grass* and the book of the same name.<sup>12</sup>

The Lurs and Bakhtiari are horsemen by nature, and they have provided the cavalry of both ancient and modern Persian kings. They never adopted, however, many of the customs of the Persian court, such as the veiling of women and the harem.

### *Miscellaneous Tribes*

The principal other nomadic peoples of Iran may be grouped as Turanian, with racial origins in central Asia and allied in feature and language to the Mongol-Tartar-Turkish peoples. Among their representatives in Iran are the Kashgais, probably of Turkish origin, who occupy the highlands to the east of the Bakhtiari country; the Turkomans, to be found in the eastern provinces of Khorasan and who are to eastern Iran what the Kurds are to western; and the Baluchis of southeastern Iran (Baluchistan and Seistan).

Besides the tribes of Iranian and Turanian origins, there are also, as has been mentioned, a number of Arab tribes. They are to be found in southwestern Iran, where Iran merges with the Mesopotamian plain, and along the Persian Gulf littoral as far east as the Indian frontier. The Arabs of Iran, however, are not to be confused with the Arab Bedouin of song and story. They are not migratory; they are date cultivators, fishers, and traders. A principal tribal group is the Khamseh, found chiefly around Shiraz. They are of Arab origin mingled with old Iranian, and their language is a mixture of the two linguistic strains.

Of the total population of Iran, the nomadic tribes constitute probably a fourth, or between three to five million. They are of considerable economic importance to the country for they produce a number of principal articles of com-

<sup>12</sup> Cooper, Merian C., *Grass*, photographs by Ernest Schoedsack, New York, 1925.

merce, namely, rugs, lambskins, dyestuffs, and medicinal herbs. Some of the finest Persian carpets are woven by these people.

They are also of prime political importance, and few dynasties of Persian kings have been able to sit for long on the throne without their support. It has been classical statecraft in Iran to draw levies from the tribes; the great Shah Abbas relied regularly upon his tribal adherents; the Kajars, who ruled the country from the middle of the eighteenth century until 1925, began as chiefs of the Turkish tribe of Kajars; and much of the trouble that besets Iran at the moment arises from tribal dissatisfaction with the government and the mismanagement of tribal relations from Teheran.

Lesser elements in the Iranian population are the Armenians, numerous in Azerbaijan and in Isfahan; the Nestorians, of particular interest to Americans since American missionary activity in Iran first began among them; the Parsees, adherents of the ancient Zoroastrian faith; and the Jews, remnants of the Babylonian Captivity.

**PART TWO**  
**THE CULTURE OF IRAN**



## I

### CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

#### A. DESIGN

THE EYES of a traveler, as he approaches an Iranian city, in whatever district he journeys, will be attracted by sunlight glinting upon a dome. The dome will generally be that of a mosque, and there may be many of them. As he draws nearer, he will observe that these domes are covered with tile, and that the tile is worked into a marvelous pattern of line and color. As he enters the city, and passes through the bazaars, observing the handicraft of the country—the rugs, the embroidered fabrics, the silver and brass work, the precious inlay, and the marvelously illuminated books—he will recognize that here is a cultural expression characteristic of the land, distinctive and unique, to be found nowhere else in the world so highly developed, so perfectly executed, so laden with the veritable spirit of a people.

#### *Design as Cultural Expression*

This spirit is one that is primarily artistic, and finds its medium in line and form. Persian culture represents a completeness of specialization, a concentration of all the faculties and inspiration of a race upon that which is beautiful, and the expression of this beauty in a fashion that is at once infinitely narrow and infinitely varied. This expression is called in the West the art of decoration or embellishment, but the term fails to convey the depth and magnitude of that which produces it. For as it evolved in Iran, it is the substance rather than the attribute of art. The beholder feels that the dome exists only to display the arrangement of line and color, that the carpet is less an article of utility than a vehicle for the expression of the pattern, and that the pattern itself is again only the means by which the weaver reveals a thought too vast and too exalted for words. The mathematician, gazing at the

symbols written on a blackboard, and seeing in them the clue to the structure of the material universe, can appreciate the meaning of pattern to the Iranian.

It is not necessary to go to Iran, of course, to appreciate the uniqueness of Persian art or to feel its impact upon human culture. The Persian rug has been prized for centuries throughout the civilized world: it is found in the throne rooms of monarchs; in houses of Christian worship; in the homes of those who invest in beauty. The variety of design of which the Iranian craftsman is capable is as wide and rich as the notes of the *bul bul*: it is literally without limit. To observe the infinite variations of line and color, it is only necessary to visit the nearest Oriental rug shop. Except for rugs woven in *juft*, that is, in pairs, no two are alike, and there are few of them that are not completely satisfying to the artistic sense.

### *Cultural Origins of Persian Art*

It is commonly believed that Islamic influences are responsible for the Iranic emphasis on design as an artistic expression. The Koran forbids the making of idols, and Koranic law or tradition prohibits the representation of human or animal figures. Artistic expression was therefore confined by Moslem doctrine to abstract line, or the depiction of flowers and foliage, which tended to become formalized designs.

While Islamic influence may have been an important contributing factor, Islam was not the source of this interest in abstract design among the Iranians. The Islamic prohibitions were generally ignored, and Iranian artists continued to depict flowers, animals, and even human figures in their rugs, miniatures, pottery, and murals. Moreover, long before the Islamic conquest, the Persian artistic genius had shown an especial aptitude for design. In the archaeological museum of Teheran, in which is contained a comprehensive array of Persian archaeological discoveries, from the most ancient times to the present, the earliest potteries and bronzes display curious and interesting designs. With each successive age the designs show increased complexity, character, and substance. Attention to design becomes more apparent after the appearance of the Aryans, that is, from the second millennium B.C.; but whether it is innately Aryan, why this facility for design should be so

characteristic of the Perso-Aryans and not of the Aryans of, say, India or Europe, what were the inner forces of the genius that called for this preoccupation with the abstract, are questions that require the further researches of scholarship. The opinions of the fascinating Chardin, who traveled in Iran in the seventeenth century, are of interest:

There is such an exquisite Beauty in the Air of *Persia*, that I can neither forget it my self, nor forbear mentioning it to every body: One would swear that the Heavens were more sublimely elevated, and tinctur'd with quite another Color there, than they are in our thick and dreary *European* Climates. And in Those Countries, the Goodness and Virtue of the Air spreads and diffuses it self over all the face of Nature, that it enobles all its Productions, and all the Works of Art with an unparallel'd Lustre, Solidity and Duration; not to speak how much this Serenity of Air enlivens and invigorates the Constitution of the Body, and how happily it influences the Disposition of the Mind.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Power of Abstraction*

An appreciation of the significance of design in Persian culture is helpful in understanding modern Iran and its people, for the same qualities of temperament, the same tendencies and cast of mind, are still important in coloring the Iranian character, even though the manifestations are less virile today than formerly. Essentially, it is a faculty for dealing with the abstract, a capacity for idea as an existence *sui generis*. It is the same faculty that produces philosophy and theology, and that lies behind the developments of mathematics, science, and pure poetry.

Of this faculty, E. G. Browne states as follows: 'The most striking feature of the Persians as a nation is their passion for metaphysical speculation. This passion, so far from being confined to the learned classes, permeates all ranks.'<sup>2</sup>

Some mention has already been made of the theological and eschatological contributions of Persian culture to the total of human comprehension of the divine order. In the grand concept of Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Righteousness, and Ahri-

<sup>1</sup> Chardin, Sir John, *Travels in Persia* (N. M. Penzer, ed.), London, 1927, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> *A Year Amongst the Persians*, London, 1893, p. 122.



man, principle of evil—or the Lie (Druj), as it was called in early Zoroastrianism—Zoroaster presented what is still perhaps the most rational statement of the problem of evil in the world: the doctrine of the warring principles, and in the Avestic scriptures appears the foreshadow of the awe-inspiring scene portrayed later in the Apocalypse: 'And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, . . . And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. . . .'<sup>8</sup>

Zoroaster, also, like the Egyptians, grappled with the profundities of immortality and resurrection, and his teachings, transmitted into Judaism by means of the Captivity, may have been part of the divine scheme of preparation of the human spirit for the coming of the Saviour. Later in history, Mithraism, while for a time a challenge to Christianity, served as a leaven in the Roman world, fermenting a broader interest and readier acceptance of the Christian revelation. From then on the great light passed to the West, but the Persian sense of the mystery of the godhead, and preoccupation with the problems of abstract being, did not cease, but produced Mani and Mazdak and the Sufi school of mystics. Sufism, communicated to Europe in late medieval times, influenced Christendom, then sinking into formalism and ecclesiasticism, and restored its mystical view of life, and through Eckhardt and others prepared the way for the Protestant Reformation.

In applied science, the Persian contribution has been less notable. Nevertheless, it is worthy of mention that the astrolabe is a Persian invention, that the works of Abu ibn Senna, or Avicenna (b. A.D. 980), were the standard treatises on medicine in Europe from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, that the science of algebra is greatly indebted to the poet, Omar Khayyam, who was also a mathematician and astronomer.

## B. POETRY

It is in poetry that the Persian faculty for pure abstraction finds, as in decorative design, its greatest expression, and

<sup>8</sup> Revelation xii: 7, 9.

by which it is today chiefly known and still unsurpassed. Poetry was congenial to the Persian temperament, a more facile medium than the sciences for its peculiar approach to the abstract. Omar turned with relief from contemplation of the mysteries of the heavenly sphere to the greater mysteries of the human spirit and dwelt upon them with affectionate but forever baffled interest:

Ah, but my Computations, People say,  
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?—Nay,  
'T was only striking from the Calendar  
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

Omar is only one of a long list of Persian poets whose verses, translated into English and the tongues of Europe, have enriched our Western culture. Firdausi, Jami, Hafiz, Sa'di, Jalal-ed-Din Rumi, Nizami, these names have already been mentioned; the list might be extended by the addition of Rudagi, Muizzi, Anwari, Farid-u-Din, all of whom may be known, in part, in English translation. What is significant is the fact that they still dominate the Persian temperament and outlook, and if one would sense the spirit of modern Iran, he must be acquainted with these poets, for they are familiar to the Persian in a way in which even Shakespeare is not familiar among us. The English language is embroidered with phrases from Shakespeare, but in Persian the songs of the poets are the woof and warp of language. To listen to a Persian speaking is to hear the veritable music of discourse: the Italian does not surpass Farsi in the rhythm of its accents, the sonority of its cadences, the water-like purity of its tones, the general melodiousness of its movement.

While the musical values of Persian poetry are largely lost in translation, the import of its content, the abstraction of idea, remain, though likewise greatly diminished in force. The word and the phrase are the vehicle of the idea, and, in Persian poetry especially, are almost inseparable from the thought. The word is more than a symbol, it is an evocation of a cultural and racial tradition; it is freighted with the experience of the race. Thus, the lines of Omar so admirably rendered into English verse by Edward Fitzgerald, ' . . . a momentary taste of Being from the Well amid the Waste—' are touchingly

evocative, but to sense in full their terrifying force, their bewildering mingling of sadness and joy and exaltation, one must have experienced the rigors of a caravan journey across the sterile Iranian *lut*.

Likewise, one must have felt the winds of the Iranian uplands to understand the flavor and the inner meaning of the passage: ' . . . as Wind along the Waste, I know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing'; and one must have known both the Persian passion for poetry and the paradisiacal quality of a Persian garden in the midst of the desert to sense the ecstasy of this: 'A Book of Verses underneath the Bough . . . and Thou Beside me singing in the Wilderness.'

### *Sufism*

Except for the *Shah Namah* of Firdausi, the principal and the finest productions of Persian poetry are associated with Sufism, which employed poetry largely as the medium of its expression. Sufism may be described as the search for God as disembodied spirit, the attempt to realize all existence in its purely abstract and spiritual essence. Sufism derives much of its inspiration from Neo-Platonism, which developed as a school in Alexandria in the third century, and spread its influence into Iran. As a philosophical system, however, it was given structure in the teachings of Abu Said ibn Abul Khayr, and appeared in the tenth century indirectly as a revolt of the Aryan spirit<sup>4</sup> against the narrow dogmatism and materialistic eschatology of Islam. Abu Said's doctrine is summarized as follows: 'What thou hast in thy head—thy ambitions—resign; what thou bearest in thy hand throw away; and whatsoever cometh upon thee, turn not back.'<sup>5</sup>

The mood of Sufi thought and the imperative necessity of the poetic form for its expression are admirably summarized by E. G. Browne, the English authority on Persian literature:

<sup>4</sup> 'A host of heterodox sects born on Persian soil—Shi'ites, Sufis, Isma'ilis, philosophers—arose to vindicate the claim of Aryan thought to be free, and to transform the religion forced on the nation by Arab steel into something . . . widely different from that . . . intended by the Arabian prophet.' Browne, E. G., *A Year Amongst the Persians* (London, 1893), 1927 ed., p. 134.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Sykes, op. cit. vol. II, p. 146.

There is the fundamental conception of God as not only Almighty and All-good, but as the sole source of Being and Beauty, and, indeed, the one Beauty and the one Being, 'in whom is submerged whatever becomes non-apparent, and by Whose light whatever is apparent is made manifest.' Closely connected with this is the symbolic language so characteristic of these, and, indeed, of nearly all mystics, to whom God is essentially 'the Friend,' 'the Beloved,' and 'the Darling'; the ecstasy of meditating on Him 'the Wine' and 'the Intoxication'; His self-revelations and Occultations, 'the Face,' and 'the Night-black Tresses,' and so forth. There is also the exaltation of the Subjective and Ideal over the Objective and Formal. . .<sup>6</sup>

Better than any treatise of Persian poetry is an example of its charm and beauty and insight, and the following verses by the sweet singer Hafiz, even in English translation, afford, far more adequately than this brief discussion, an aroma of the true fragrance of the flower that has blossomed on the Iranian uplands:

#### MYSTIC ODE

In wide Eternity's vast space,  
Where no beginning was, wert Thou:  
The rays of all-pervading grace  
Beneath Thy veil flamed on Thy brow.  
Then Love and Nature sprang to birth,  
And Life and Beauty filled the earth.

Awake, my soul! pour forth thy praise,  
To that great Being anthems raise—  
That wondrous Architect who said,  
'Be formed,' and this great orb was made.

Since first I heard the blissful sound—  
'To man My Spirit's breath is given';  
I knew, with thankfulness profound,  
His sons we are—our Home is heaven.  
Oh! give me tidings that shall tell  
When I may hope with Thee to dwell,  
That I may quit this world of pain,  
Nor seek to be its guest again.

A bird of holiness am I,  
That from the vain world's net would fly; -

<sup>6</sup> Browne, E. G., *History of Persian Literature Under Tartar Dominion*, London, 1920, vol. II, p. 267.

Shed, bounteous Lord, one cheering shower  
 From Thy pure cloud of guiding power,  
 Before, even yet, the hour is come,  
 When my dust rises toward its home.

What are our deeds?—all worthless, all—  
 Oh, bring Devotion's wine,  
 That strength upon my soul may fall  
 From Drops Thou mad'st divine.  
 The World's possessions fade and flee,  
 The only good is—loving Thee!

O happy hour! when I shall rise  
 From earth's delusions to the skies,  
 Shall find my soul at rest, and greet  
 The traces of my loved one's feet:  
 Dancing with joy, whirled on with speed,  
 Like motes that gorgeous sunbeams feed,  
 Until I reach the fountain bright  
 Whence yonder sun derives his light.<sup>7</sup>

### *Modern Literature*

Persian poetry is not a thing of the past but is still a vital and favorite form of expression in Iran; among modern poets may be mentioned Pizhman-i-Bakhtiari, Bina, Hekmat, Shafaq, Lahuti, Sarmad, to give only a few. That poetry is not an esoteric art but one that men of affairs do not disdain may be indicated by the fact that Hekmat, who has not only written poetry but has translated several of Shakespeare's plays into Persian, is a distinguished public figure who has served in various ministerial capacities, including that of minister of justice. Shafaq, known as a philosopher and mystic, is also a noted Iranian patriot, who was one of the group who fought the Russians in Tabriz during the Constitutional movement of 1906; he is today professor at the University, and in 1945 served as member of the Iranian delegation to the United Nations Conference at San Francisco. Lahuti is a social reformer, one time chief of gendarmerie in Tabriz, who employs the poetic form to advance the cause he supports. As a result of his pro-Russian activities, he was exiled in 1923 by the late Riza Shah Pahlavi, and has since lived in Russia. One of his

<sup>7</sup> Translated by Sir William Jones.

best-known poems is entitled *Kirimil*, or 'Kremlin,' the opening lines of which have been translated as follows:

How long shalt thou shed tears over the throne of Nurshirvan?  
O Heart, read the secrets hid in the Kremlin.<sup>8</sup>

The characteristics of modern Persian poetry have been appraised by Mohammed Ishaque as follows:

(a) Ornate style of the past has been supplanted by simple and natural diction;

(b) Poetry is personal and the poets display greater individuality than heretofore;

(c) Considerable originality of theme;

(d) Amatory themes are less common today;

(e) Nature, formerly only a background in poetry, is now wooed for its own sake;

(f) Exclusively personal feelings have become less conspicuous in favor of themes dwelling on the life of the community in its political, social, and economic aspects.

### C. MUSIC

Only a word can be said about Persian music. Music, even more than decoration or poetry, is the quintessence of design and the abstraction of pattern. Because of this very ethereality—the fact that music is even more insubstantial than the air upon which it palpitates—what exists today of Persian musical art is only a vestige of what it once must have been, about which we are left to guess from fragments of research. It is likely that Persian music influenced Byzantine, and that the strange, evocative music of the chants and litanies of the Eastern Churches was largely derived from Persia. This much we know: music was highly favored by Achaemenian and Sassanian monarchs, and it was the custom—a custom that still persists in Iran—to greet the rising and the setting sun with music of strings, drums, and cymbals, performed above the principal gate of the cities. There has come down to us also the legend of the two famous singers of Chosroes Parviz—Serguesch (Ser-

<sup>8</sup> Ishaque, Mohammed, *Modern Persian Poetry*, Calcutta, 1943. The Soviet Press for Foreign Languages (Moscow) published in 1946 a volume of Lahuti's poems entitled *Divan of Abol Qasim Lahuti*.

gius) and Barbedh, the latter of whom is said to have had three hundred melodies at his command. Masoudi, the Arab historian, attributed to the Persians the invention of modulations, of rhythms, and of divisions, and the seven Royal Modes that express the sentiments of the soul; but how much of what Masoudi attributes to the Persians was typically Persian and how much was of Greek or other influence is not certain.<sup>9</sup>

The word 'guitar,' used generically for stringed instruments that are plucked, though generally considered to be derived from the Greek *cithara*, may have come originally from the Persian *si-tar*, meaning a three-stringed instrument.

It seems fairly certain that the lute (Ar. *berbat*) came from Iran, and was dispersed eastward as far as China. Other ancient Persian musical instruments were the flute, mandolin, hautboy, and harp.

### *Use of Modes*

The chief characteristic of Iranian music, as of Arabic and Indian music, is the employment of modes, as distinct from harmony. Modal music exemplifies the purest abstraction of design. A mode may be defined as a group of notes related to the tonic and all other notes of that group and summarizing in their organization the conditions governing the composition of a particular type of melody. The octave, or scale, was divided into either 17 intervals (in Khorasan) or 24 intervals as is found in Indian music. The intervals were not fixed, however (as on a piano keyboard), but the value of each note or interval could be modified as the creative genius of the musician dictated. Besides half tones, as in the chromatic scale, the musician employed quarter tones, eighth tones, and smaller divisions of the interval. The same melodic line accordingly could be executed with an infinite variety of mood and feeling. Thus, in the same way that a basic line pattern of a Persian rug remains unmodified, while variety is achieved by embellishment, so a thematic line could be embellished by modal treatment.

Possibly as many as a hundred standard modes were employed, and the names of thirty modes employed by Barbedh

<sup>9</sup> Huart, M. Clement, in Lavignac's *Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, Paris, 1922, vol. v.

have come down to us. There were, it appears, originally twelve basic tones, which were said to correspond to the zodiacal signs, and were to be used in accordance with the time of day, and each of these conveyed its own recognized mood. These twelve tones could be continued or modified by six *āvāz* and 24 *cho'ba*, which again could be divided into 48 varieties, called *goūché*. Because of the abstraction of language, the precise meaning of these terms is not clear, but their general effect was to permit the production of an almost infinite number of gradations in the tonal structure.

This abundance of modes may be contrasted to the seven classical modes of the Greeks, the eight modes (four Authentic and four Plagal) of the Gregorian system (6th century), the twelve modes of Glareanus (16th century), and the two modes to which modern secular music is largely confined. Modal music as a form of musical expression in the West is found chiefly in liturgical compositions, though a revival of interest in modal expression is found in a number of modern compositions.<sup>10</sup>

Much of what must have been in former times a marvelous florescence of musical form has been lost in modern Iran, owing largely, it is probable, to the repressive influence of Islam, which is not a joyful or exuberant faith.<sup>11</sup>

Still, if the ear is attentive, and one is prepared to explore the fascination of what at first seems sad and plaintive, he may hear Persian music on the *si-tar*, the three-stringed lute, and on the pipes, in village hamlets, behind high walls, in corners of the bazaar, or on the wastelands where the shepherd keeps watch over his flocks. And as one listens, and the ear grows accustomed to the melodies, it will be discovered that Persian musical art today is not dead, or completely sterile, but retains a mysterious power to soothe and exalt.

<sup>10</sup> For a brief discussion of Western modal music, see Scholes, Percy A., *Oxford Companion to Music*, art. 'Modes,' London, New York, 1943.

<sup>11</sup> The doctrinal view of Islam towards music has been a subject of controversy among Islamic theologians, some holding that the Prophet disapproved of music, others contending that he approved it. In any case, music has never become in Islam the adjunct to worship that it has been in Christendom ever since the disciples sang hymns together on the eve of the Crucifixion.



## D. ARCHITECTURE

Persian architecture also displays a characteristic genius. This genius attained its artistic heights in structural form and embellishment during the Safavid dynasty, from the sixteenth century through the eighteenth. Isfahan, capital of the Safavid kings, is rich with magnificent examples, as are Meshed, Qum, and Shiraz. Curiously enough, the finest example of Persian architecture, expressing the very essence of the Persian spirit, a structure accounted by many to be mankind's greatest triumph in architectural form, a work of passionate beauty and inspiration, is to be found in India and is the work probably of an Italian architect. This is the Taj Mahal, built by Shah Jehan at Agra, 1631-53, as a tomb for his favorite queen, Mumtaz-i-Mahal.

*Characteristic Features*

The principal features of this architecture, apart from the decorative detail, are the domes and cupolas, of ethereal grace; the imposing, ogive gateways, and the ogive vaults. While the dome is usually associated with mosque architecture, a more common, more utilitarian, and less imposing use is in bazaar construction. The bazaars are covered streets, the roofing of which is vaulted by a series of joined cupolas. Light is admitted through apertures in the apex of the cupolas. Bazaars are distinctively Persian and nowhere else in the world will their like be found.

The ogive arch, familiar to the West in Gothic architecture, is found everywhere. It is said to have originated in the use of unfired brick, and when constructed of that material affords a sense of lightness and grace which equals that of the finest Gothic. An architectural use of the ogive vault, unique in Iran, is the *ivan*, which may be described as a structure roofed but open on one side. Vaulted *ivans* were employed originally as throne or audience chambers, and their modern descendants are found in the band and concert shells of parks and open-air theaters. From a structural standpoint, the principal contribution of Persian genius was a method of setting a dome on a square, by a device known as the squinch, at once

ingenious and satisfactory. Oddly enough, this practical method never found its way into Europe.

### *Magnitude of Scale*

For pure grandeur in structure, however, one turns to the work of the Achaemenian and Sassanian kings, of which only ruins exist today—but such ruins! Persepolis has been mentioned. Here, on a stone platform 40 feet high, 1,500 feet in length, 900 feet in width, was erected a collection of palaces of a size and grandeur to stupefy the imagination, which, in the view of some travelers, are the most imposing architectural work in history, save possibly the Pyramids.

A paradoxical feature of the Persepolis constructions is that, unlike the Pyramids, they were preceded by no transitional architecture, but issued directly from the wooden dwellings which were their structural antecedent.

Again, in the Sassanian period, appears a great architecture, conceived and executed on the most imposing scale. This architecture developed first in Fars, the native province of the Achaemenian rulers, and was definitely a revival of Achaemenian traditions in reaction to Arsacid Hellenism. The castle of Ardeshir (A.D. 224-41), founder of the Sassanian dynasty, which Ernst Herzfeld rediscovered in 1925, was constructed on a more sumptuous scale than any in Europe and was one of the parents of all those great structures that were erected by the castle builders of medieval times. It was built on the summit of a mountain 1,600 feet high, near Firuzabad: the ground plan covered an acre and a half, the walls were 100 feet high. Even more grandiose was the palace of Chosroes, probably Chosroes II Parviz (590-628), near modern Kasr-Shirin, on the Baghdad-Teheran highway. The palace was 1,220 feet long and 623 feet wide and was built on a terrace that extended an additional 935 feet before the palace. The magnitude of the construction can be appreciated by recalling that the greatest length of St. Peter's in Rome is 718 feet, and that the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul in Washington (D.C.), when completed, will be 525 feet long and 275 feet wide at the transept.

The largest in scale of all Sassanian royal residences was the palace at Ctesiphon, built probably by Nurshirvan, or Chosroes I (531-79), near modern Baghdad. The superb, vaulted

hall, in which the Great King sat on his golden throne in view of his subjects, can still be seen for miles across the Mesopotamian plain. It is the highest masonry arch in the world (90 feet) and spans a width of 84 feet. The use of vaulting, which was characteristic of Sassanian architecture, and remains characteristic of modern Iranian architecture, had the advantage of providing a hall which, no matter how vast, was unbroken by pier or column, and offered a setting for kingly state that has no equal in architectural design.

## II

### SOCIAL LIFE AND ORGANIZATION

THE TRAVELER to Iran, coming from the abundance of the Western shores, will be struck by the evident and widespread material poverty of the Iranian people. If, however, he approaches the land from a sojourn in India, he is apt to be impressed by the relatively greater comfort and material well-being of the common man compared to his fellow being in India. Before an appraisal is made of a civilization by its material standards, some examination is due the intellectual, physical, spiritual, and moral factors that contribute to the material state. The eye of the Western man is, in any case, apt to be myopic on the subject of material progress, since its chief prospect and object of gaze in the West is a display of material production unexampled in history, a display so profuse that it conceals the underlying spiritual and intellectual humus by which it has been nourished.

Before the importance and the causes of the material poverty of the Iranian people can be assessed, or the cures prescribed, it is necessary to have some understanding of the various factors that have tended to produce or ameliorate this condition. Among these are the social organization of the people.

#### A. CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL LIFE

A principal characteristic of the social life and organization of Iran today, as of yesterday, is its fluidity and individuality. In these it retains what may be regarded as a main characteristic of the Aryan cultural heritage wherever the Aryan-speaking peoples have journeyed, with the major exception of India. That is to say, in Iran, while there may be social classes, there is no caste, and the movement of an individual from class to class has been, and remains, relatively free.

The nearest approach to caste is found in the status of

women, who were, until within the last decade, a class apart, hemmed by arbitrary restrictions of custom and creed. The social status of women in Iran is a product of the Perso-Aryan tradition, but the restraints upon women were intensified as a result of Islamic doctrines and influence.

### *Fluidity of Social Movement*

The traveler who approaches Iran with an appreciation of the individuality of the Iranians will quickly find himself at home among them and in possession of the surest key to an understanding of Persian culture. Such a traveler, for instance, was James Morier, who served early in the nineteenth century as secretary to the British Minister at Teheran. Returning home, he wrote a novel of Persian life called *Hajji Baba of Isfahan*. Partly satirical in nature, it recounted the adventures of a good-humored, likable rascal and adventurer, who started in life as a porter and peddler and ended by becoming a minister in the court of the shah. Possibly this rise to honor and position, by one who had no education, no position by birth, and was a rascal to boot, struck the Englishman as paradoxical: it may be a commentary on England of the early nineteenth century as much as on Iran. So characteristic was it, however, of the Iranian people and their ways that it was translated into Persian, in which it became a classic as it is in English. Many Persians believed it to have been written by one of their own countrymen, so revealing was it of a certain type of unscrupulous adventurer common in Iran.

Those who are inclined to regard Iranians as a species distinct from, say, the American, should read *Hajji Baba* and then Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court*, and the essential similarities of the types portrayed will be obvious. In both cases the hero is practical, with a strong sense of humor and sentiment; shrewd and not above trickery; adaptable, opportunistic, intelligent, and showing a marked capacity for growth and advancement, but without any social, moral, or other disciplines.

### *Recognition of Individual Merit*

The most recent example of the Persian success story is that of Riza Khan, who rose from the rank of private in the army

to become the *Shah-in-Shah* of Iran. As one becomes acquainted with the Iranian scene, one will come upon numerous examples of those who have passed from poverty to wealth, from obscurity to renown, and, likewise, from the top of the ladder downward. From another and serener order may be mentioned the physician Seyyid Khan, who began life in a Kurdish village, was converted to Christianity as a boy, was compelled to flee the wrath of his kinsmen for having renounced his faith, who worked as a stable boy in the household of a missionary in Hamadan, obtained the rudiments of an education, and finally enough money to go abroad, where he studied medicine; he returned to his native land, rose in his profession, and became the mediciner to princes and poor, and died at an old age, one of the most renowned men in modern Iranian history. 'From one point of view,' commented Lord Curzon, a shrewd and realistic appraiser, if one not entirely sympathetic to the Iranians, 'Persia is the most democratic country in the world. Lowness of birth or station is positively not the slightest bar to promotion or office of the most exalted nature.'<sup>1</sup> It may be significant also of this characteristic of Iranian social life that the shahs customarily selected their grand viziers not from the nobility but from the obscurest, often the poorest, classes.

One who has spent some time in, say, India, and has become accustomed to caste distinctions there, has got used to hiring one servant to cook and another to sweep, has learned that in India, as in the army, a gentleman may not carry a parcel in the streets, will be refreshingly shocked on going to Iran. There a servant is like a member of the family, who is not afraid to correct his master's son, or volunteer his ideas to the master himself, and, in the homes of the moderately well off, does as many jobs as the proverbial 'hired man' on an American farm.

Americans, fresh from the democracy of the West, with its own peculiar lines of caste, which are likely to obsess a person with the idea of 'front,' and possibly to make him feel that to make an impression he must belong to an exclusive club, live in a house in the best suburb or an apartment on the best street, and wear the best tailoring the town affords, will be

<sup>1</sup> *Persia*, London, 1892, vol. 1, p. 444.

equally refreshed by the nonchalance their Iranian friends manifest in regard to such matters. They have a keen sense of personal worth, and, like their counterparts here, are quick to cut through sham. One of the highest born Iranian princes, a man of great wealth and a general in the army, lives contentedly in a made-over stable behind one of the palaces of the shah. One of the leaders in Iran today, a professor on the faculty of the University, a member of Parliament, and a delegate to the United Nations conference at San Francisco, began life as a poor student in Tabriz. One of the most popular foreigners in Teheran during the days of World War II, when the city was full of foreign army officers and officials, was a young army captain, to whose modest three-room flat came high and low of the Iranian government for tea and for conversation.

### *Lack of Social Outlook*

While this sense of individuality in the Iranian has been a source of freedom and opportunity, it has not been without its attendant evils. Iran exhibits the virtues of a free society, but it also displays all the evils of such a society unhampered by the moral and social restraints that have been developing in the West. It is, in a sense, an example of the decay of what is called by economists the 'capitalistic system.' The principal economic problems of the country—of landlordism, of commercial rapacity, of uninhibited pursuit of gain, of irresponsible wealth and unrelieved poverty—may be attributed in large measure to the effects of a rampant individualism. Marco Polo, traveling in Iran in the thirteenth century, commented upon the city of Tabriz as follows: 'The merchants concerned in foreign commerce acquire considerable wealth, but the inhabitants in general are poor,' and these words are an apt summation of the economic condition and problem today.<sup>2</sup>

### B. SOURCES OF THE IRANIAN SOCIAL SPIRIT

Among the factors contributing to the quality and character of the Iranian social organization is the nature of the land.

<sup>2</sup> *Travels*, ch. ix.

The individualism of Iranian life, like the corresponding individualism of the American West, may be explained in part by the vastness of the country and its sparsity of population. Settled localities are separated by expanses of desert and grazing land, and the trammels of civilization are everywhere challenged by the freedom of the uninhabited spaces. To the Iranian, as to the American of the Great Plains, the openness of the landscape is an invitation to movement and freedom; it exercises upon the spirit the subtle effect of setting it in rebellion against the restrictions of convention and the pressures of society.

### *Democratic Spirit of Islam*

Second among the influences upon the Iranian social spirit must be mentioned the religious faith of Islam to which the greater part of the inhabitants adhere. The total effect of Islam on the Iranian people will be taken up later, but here it may be mentioned that it is a religion without a hierarchy. There are no priests in Islam. A cardinal tenet of the faith is that every man prays to God himself. He needs no intermediary. And so, while there is a sort of hierarchy, consisting of *mujtahids*, *mullahs*, *seyyids*, and *hajjis*, it does not exist by ordination or claim the attributes of authority and infallibility. There is an essential democracy in Islam by which whoever bows his head upon the earth towards Mecca, recites the Creed, and keeps the Month of Fast, is a Muslim and a brother. Less embrasive than Christianity, which teaches that all men are brothers, it regards those outside Islam as outside the domain of fraternity. Yet over those within the fold it throws the cloak of unity in the peace of God, so that there are, in true Islam, no distinctions between black and white, between him who rides and him who walks, between him who speaks fairly in tongues and him who is dumb, between him who rules and him who is ruled. In Islam, only those who are of the female sex are considered inferiors, or, as the Koran says, 'as a field to be plowed.'

A third influence making for social fluidity is the general decay of administration and the absence of hieratical distinctions. A man may wrap a green girdle about his waist, put on a green turban, go into another city, and there declare himself



a *seyyid*, a descendant of the Prophet, and if he is sufficiently assured in manner, he can carry off his deception, for genealogies are nonexistent or haphazard: there is no public register of *seyyids*, and no one to challenge the assertion of him who claims to be one. What is true of the *seyyid* is also true to a degree of the professional classes. The ranks of mullahs, who are the scribes of Islam, the expounders of the religious law, the preachers and the custodians of the mosques, increased so inordinately, and became such a parasitical group that among the reforms instituted by Riza Shah Pahlavi during the 1930's was a purge of the profession and the institution of government examination for admission to the order. Likewise, though in theory examinations are required for admittance to the practice of law and medicine, until recent years anyone with appearance and presumption was able to set himself up as a healer or advocate.

#### *Commerce as Leavening Influence*

Reference to the commercial character of the civilization has already been made. The bazaar, or merchant, element has always been important in the social structure, and generally is accorded a respect exceeded only by that of the landed nobility. Readers of the *Thousand and One Nights* will recall how often the heroes of those tales were merchants. In trade, fortunes accumulate and disappear according to the varying skill of the trader and the fluctuations of the market. By luck and diligence a small trader becomes a great merchant, before whom the doors of opportunity open, and about whom the supplicants clamor while equally the pitfalls multiply. This is true in Iran as well as on Wall Street.

Finally, among the elements in Iranian life that give it its characteristic democratic quality is the fact that there is no hereditary nobility, and no laws of primogeniture such as have perpetuated families in England and to a lesser extent America. Inheritance is uncertain, since polygamy is still legal though rare; and though under recent legislation women enjoy certain statutory rights of contract, actually their social and legal position is dependent largely upon the will of the husband. Under the Koranic law, a share of the estate must go

to each heir, with the proviso that in such division a male shall receive the portion of two females.<sup>3</sup> The exclusiveness of nobility has been further affected by the freedom with which sovereigns in times past elevated favorites to position and honor by means of the gift of a title. A favorite barber, for instance, might receive a scroll—in lieu of his fee—decorating him 'The Exalted of His Profession.'

In this connection, the following from S. G. Wilson's *Persian Life and Customs* may be quoted:

Men can readily change their social status. A ballet dancer was the favorite of Fath Ali Shah. The son of a *fellah* may be vizier tomorrow. Lowly birth is not a bar to the highest position. An adventurer presenting a rifle to a prince is dubbed *khan*. A carpenter, tailor, or photographer is paid for his services with a title. . . . The official world has an infinity of titles conferred by the shah indicating some relation to the government, by the use of the words *Doʻlāh*, *Mulḱ*, and *Sultānah*, as the Eye of the Government, the Guide or the Righteousness of the State, the Faithful of the Sultan. Physicians receive their titles such as the Sword, the Confidence, the Fidelity of the Physicians.<sup>4</sup>

Although this practice of the shahs has disappeared, one of the reforms of Riza Shah Pahlavi having been the prohibition, in 1935, of the granting or use of titles of any sort, except for the equivalents of 'mister' and 'madame' and, for high officials, 'excellency,' the abundance of names with the prefix or suffix of *Khan*, *Hajji*, *Kerbelaī*, *Meshedi*, and the like, indicate how strong was the influence of the practice upon the social structure.

### C. SOCIAL CLASSES

While the individuality and fluidity of the Iranian social structure has tended towards a general leveling and absorption of class, it also cultivates distinctions and differences, so that the Iranian scene is one of great variety, in which class and distinction are both apparent and important. That is to say, while the boundaries of class are shadowy, its substance is evident.

<sup>3</sup> *Koran*, Sura iv, *Women*.

<sup>4</sup> New York, 1895, p. 181 and footnote.

*Landowners*

Outside the royal court, itself a structure of fluid composition, the most important and the most solid class in Iran is that of the great landowners. The Iranian agricultural system is predominantly feudal. This feudalism was produced by some of the same factors which produced feudalism in Europe. The fact that tillage is generally concentrated in oases, called villages, requiring a common supply of water that must be provided by means greater than an individual cultivator can muster, has fostered a concentration of ownership. While the cultivator is not a serf and is free to leave his land and move elsewhere, in practice the land is farmed by family succession. The landlord owns the entire village, and a landowner's wealth is measured by the number of villages of which he is proprietor. As landlord, he takes a fifth to a half of the crop as rent, although this varies according to the general fertility of the region, whether irrigated or not, and whether he provides seed and oxen. The prevailing rule of thumb is to attribute a fifth of the produce to the land, a fifth to the water, a fifth to the seed, a fifth to the oxen and implements, and a fifth to the labor of the cultivator.

The landowners often never see their villages, which are managed by stewards. They prefer to live in Teheran, or the larger cities, that are furnished with the comforts of civilized life, and where they exist as a compact oligarchy, the most powerful class in the country.

They live simply, that is, with a retinue of servants who are like poor relatives, enjoying the pleasures of spacious gardens, delicate viands, lively conversation, and, in recent years, such added items as radio music, ball-room dancing and indirect lighting. Large parties are infrequent, however, for despite wealth and position, their social life is still patriarchal and limited to relatives and members of the clan. They provide officers for the army and administrators for the civil government. The Iranian parliament, or Majlis, is largely composed of landowners. While the landowners comprise the principal ruling class, theirs is not a vested interest. The political tradition for centuries has been one of monarchical absolutism, and the shahs have customarily regarded as a per-

quisite of office the enrichment of their private fortunes by exactions from the landowners. Even the progressive Riza Shah Pahlavi, whose reformations of the Iranian social system will be noted later, did not hesitate to sequester vast estates to his personal enrichment.

### *Merchants*

Generally apart from the landowner is the merchant class, or the bazaar, as it is universally known, though wealthy merchants will invest their wealth in villages, and landowners may embark in trade. In the case of the bazaar, wealth is more fluid, and the merchant class ranges from the peddler with his wares upon his back, and the tradesman with no more than a ledge in the bazaar, on which he squats with his merchandise within reach of his hand, to the powerful *tajir* and *sarraf* who, like Antonio in the *Merchant of Venice*, may have their argosies in a dozen distant ports, their agents in New York, London, and Shanghai.

The bazaar is well organized into guilds and 'chambers of commerce.' It is the vocal element in Iranian society, and being in constant touch with affairs of the world is more alert to the winds of change. News travels in the bazaar like fire on a prairie, and bazaar sentiment is a great mold of public policy. In times past, and even more recently, the power of the bazaar, particularly when united with that of the clergy, has been sufficient to unseat ministers and to cause the throne to tremble. So potent was the bazaar that in 1294 it compelled Kai Khatu to abandon a project for the issuance of paper money; in 1891, in alliance with the mullahs, it carried out a boycott in protest against a tobacco monopoly that Nasr-ed-Din Shah had granted to foreigners, and compelled that monarch to rescind the concession. Again, the constitutional movement in Iran, which obtained the grant of the Constitution in 1906, was largely stimulated by bazaar agitation for reform.

### *Clergy*

The Moslem clergy <sup>5</sup> was until recent years a more powerful element in the political, social, and economic life of the coun-

<sup>5</sup> Properly, there is no Moslem clergy, since ordination is not an element of Moslem theology. The term *clergy* is here used to indicate collectively

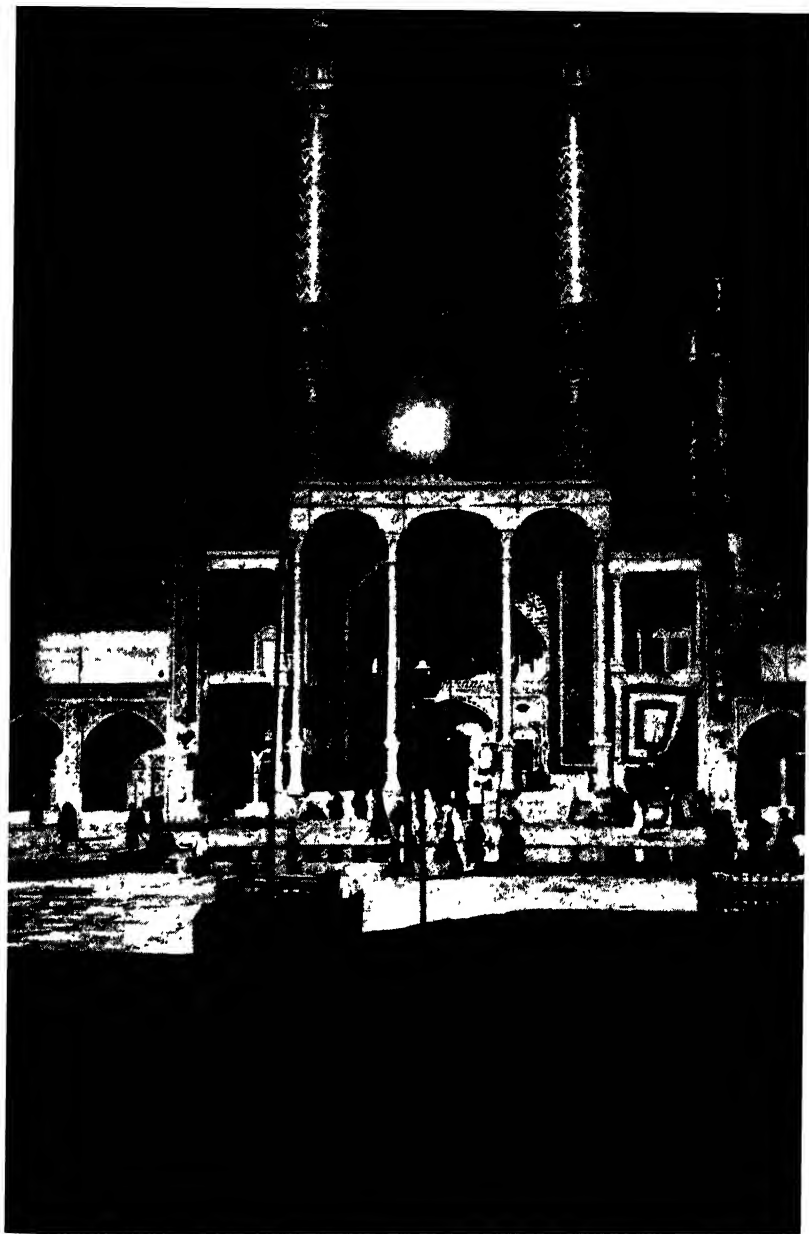
try than it is today. A principal duty of the Moslem is the giving of alms, as a result of which a great body of wealth and estates has become the property of various shrines and religious foundations. Furthermore, until modern times, the Koranic law was the fundamental law of the land, and as expounders of this law the mullahs exercised enormous influence in affairs of state. Islam has been declining in influence, however, particularly since the revolution of 1906; in recent years the application of the *Shari'a*, or religious law, has been limited; the pious foundations have been brought under State control; and the power and influence of the clergy have been restricted in other ways. Consequently the importance of the clergy as a class has greatly diminished.

### *Cultivators and Artisans*

The cultivators of the soil are the most neglected though not the most unfortunate class in Iran. Stalwart, patient, frugal, unlettered, and sometimes brutalized, they tend the fields and grow the crops of wheat and barley and rice, the grapes, melons, and the various sorts of nuts and fruits, which feed the cities and are to some extent exported. Since the adoption of military conscription they have provided men for the army.

The artisans of the town suffer a poverty greater than that of the cultivator. They work in wood, leather, silver, and brass; they weave rugs and execute the fine *khatam*, or 'nailhead' inlay work, all in cramped quarters where the light and ventilation are poor; their food is dear and their diet limited. Nevertheless, since industry is primarily individual and household, they enjoy a relative independence, and as they generally market their wares direct, they are quasi-members of the merchant class and share its opportunities. A depressing element of Persian crafts is that children are put to work at an early age. This is largely due to the poverty of the people and the necessity of winning a livelihood early in life. An important factor, however, is the characteristic of this craftsmanship, its fineness of detail, for which the tiny fingers and delicacy of touch of children are particularly suited. This is especially so in rug weaving, and the finer the weave the more certain one

the members of the various hierarchies, such as *mullahs*, *mujtahids*, *ulema*, and their like.



*Photo courtesy United States Army Signa*

HRINE OF FATIMA AT OUM



*Photo courtesy United States Army Signal Corps*

VILLAGE ARCHITECTURE

VILLAGE COBBLER

NOVAB SALAR JUNG GARDEN

*Photo by*



may be that the rug was woven by little children. There is, of course, no effective prohibition of child labor in Iran.

Beneath the artisans are the mass of unskilled or semi-skilled laborers: porters (for man is still a beast of burden in Iran), donkey drivers, house servants, masons, gardeners, laborers, and scavengers, who exist on a pittance, live in hovels, and yet, for all their miserable poverty, maintain a certain independence and insouciance that elevate them above their fellow beings of similar class in neighboring countries, such as Egypt or India. Among the members of each of these professions—for an occupation, however lowly, constitutes in Iran a 'profession'—exists a freemasonry, a form of guild solidarity, which yields them a certain pride and standing. Nowhere in Iran will there be encountered the cringing and servile class of touts such as those that assail the visitor to Cairo with their improper solicitations; nor will there be found the abasement of human dignity that is encountered among the lower castes of India.

Of recent years there has appeared in the Iranian cities, as a result of the attempts at modernization, a new class of society, the factory proletariat. State-owned or State-supported enterprise introduced a variety of mass industries—'mass' in a relative sense, of course—and the determination of the Shah to magnify his reign brought a great influx of population to the cities—Teheran doubled in size in two decades—all with the effect of creating a large new social element: people fresh from the hinterland, unfamiliar with the disciplines of factory work, easy prey to exploitation. Unhinged from their traditions, baffled by the perplexities of a world they had had no hand in making, they are today ready subjects for Communist propaganda, and, organized into political groups, they offer a continuing threat to the stability of the government.

#### D. WOMEN AS A SOCIAL CLASS

Until recent years women constituted a class in Iranian society that was subject to restraints, disqualifications, and prohibitions to a degree suffered by no other group of humanity. No more depressing sight met the eye of the traveler from the West than the funereal figures, shrouded in black,



that flitted along the streets, silent, timorous, unreal. Passing a mosque by night, during the celebrations, one might see them crouched outside, among the dogs, listening to the mul-lah within describing to the Faithful the joys of a paradise to which they could never hope to be admitted, since woman was, according to the Koran, an 'inferior being.'<sup>6</sup>

### *Custom of the Veil*

Not only were women required to veil in public, but their private life was equally restricted by a veil of brick and the veil of convention. A wall surrounded the garden. Another wall closed off the *andirun*, or women's quarters, access to which was the privilege only of the head of the house. A visitor never saw the females of the family, nor did he dare inquire even about their health. A woman's existence, except in relation to her husband, was restricted to her kind. The more elevated her husband's status, the more secluded and abject her condition. In the countryside, she might work in the fields with the men, though even here she carried a corner of her shawl in her teeth to conceal her face. Among the tribesmen women were freer, and there the veil was not worn. But in the towns, among the well-to-do, the life of a woman was terrible and lonely, full of bitterness and envy. Though she might be loaded with jewels and brocades by a doting spouse, she never knew when his favor would be shifted to another. Confined to the company of her sex, she became a prey to gossip and adept at intrigue. She knew nothing of the world beyond the wall; her faculties withered, her soul was dispirited.

The institution of the veil is ancient in Iran and is probably of Aryan origin. The earliest picture of the domestic institution is found in the Book of Esther, in which is recounted how the Great King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to show herself to his guests. The queen refused; and because of her refusal, and lest her contumacy set an example to women generally, 'so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported,' the Great King divorced her.

<sup>6</sup> 'Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God hath gifted the one above the other, and on account of the outlay they make from their substance for them.' *Koran*, Sura IV, *Women*.

The veil is a product of the same temperament that creates the sanctuary, that put the Holy of Holies within the innermost curtain of the Tabernacle, and fences off the altar by the Ikonostasis. It originated probably with the great value placed on the domestic institution by the early Aryans, coupled with a somewhat perverted notion of how best to preserve its sanctity. The advent of Islam worked a further perversion of good intentions. The Koranic law authorized polygamy and concubinage, and permitted a man to divorce his wife at will. By means of *muta'a*, or temporary marriage, a form of prostitution in the precincts of the holy shrines developed under clerical auspices, which was doctrinally justified by the necessity of refreshing the pilgrim and purifying his thoughts of lust before entering the holy place. In the rice fields of Mazanderan, S. G. Wilson recounts, it was the practice for a man to engage as concubines for the season as many women as were required to harvest the crops.<sup>7</sup>

Recently, however, a remarkable transformation has occurred in the outward status of women. Since 1936 the veil has ceased to exist, and in the cities women, who a decade ago never appeared in public, except in the enclosing *chaddar* and *pardah*, may now be seen strolling down the streets in the latest Parisian or Hollywood modes. And while one may see the élite of society dancing in cabarets, sipping cocktails, and otherwise partaking of the freedoms of their sisters of the favored lands of the West, one may also find women of other classes busy attending schools, entering the professions, or earning a livelihood as clerks, typists, and factory workers.

In spite of these improvements, however, the legal status of women has been only nominally modified by the reforms. They may still be divorced at the husband's whim, and in such a case they have but limited claim to the children born of the marriage, while their property rights are limited to what may have been agreed upon as divorce settlement at the time the marriage was contracted. Moreover, the shah who abolished the veil and instituted reforms in the legal and social status of women did not hesitate also to take to himself wives and concubines.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit. p. 263.

## E. THE MINORITIES

Among the peoples of Iran who constitute distinct social classes are the members of the various religious minorities. These are the Christians, the Jews, and the Guebers or Parsees. The Christians consist of the Armenians, the Nestorians, and the adherents of the indigenous Christian churches. Of these, the Armenians are the largest element. They are to be found principally in Azerbaijan, where there are many villages predominantly Armenian, and in colonies in the principal towns and cities. The most considerable number of them outside northwestern Iran are found in Isfahan, in a suburb called New Julfa, which was established during the reign of Shah Abbas, when that Shah transferred a colony of Armenian artisans and craftsmen from Julfa, on the Araxes, to Isfahan, in order to provide skilled workmen for the embellishment of the capital. The Armenians have been a respected class in Iran, and it is a fair generalization that while they have been subject to some restrictions and disabilities, on the whole they have been accepted as an indigenous element.

Certainly the Armenians have never been persecuted in Iran as they have been in Turkey; individuals frequently occupy stations of prominence in the service of the State. During the celebration of Moharram, when fanaticism is fanned by the bloody spectacles, it has generally been safer for Armenians to remain indoors, but this celebration occurred only once a year, and now has been abolished.

The greatest sufferings of the Armenians have been due to the depredations of the Kurds, with whom, in Anatolia, they have long been at odds, partly because of the machinations of the Ottoman sultanate, and partly because of the willingness of elements of the Armenian population to support foreign intervention, particularly Russian, in times of national crisis. As in Turkey, the Armenians have been inclined to look to Russia as the protector of their interests, and, however justified, it has been a course exciting suspicion of their devotion to the national interest, and has had its effect upon the relations between them and the Moslem population.

This inclination to look to foreign powers for support was

not lessened by the policies of Riza Shah Pahlavi, who after 1925 intensified the restrictions upon the Armenians. Armenian schools were closed or hampered in their operations, and it became difficult for an Armenian to rise to any position of rank in the administration.

### *Nestorians*

The Nestorians, remnants of the once populous Assyrian nation, adherents to what is perhaps the oldest Christian rite—the Church of the East, founded by the Apostles Thaddeus and Thomas—have been reduced to an insignificant number in modern times. Their principal concentration has been in the northwest, around Mosul in Iraq and the Urmiah plain in Iran. In appearance and modes of life they offer many resemblances to the Kurds. While the patriarch of the Church of the East is also the head of the Assyrian nation and endeavors to keep alive a national consciousness among his people, the Nestorians are too weak in number and influence seriously to cherish ideas of a national sovereignty of their own.

### *Other Minorities*

Besides the Armenians and Nestorians, there are adherents to the Roman Catholic and indigenous Protestant Churches, drawn not only from the older Christian faiths but also from Islam and Judaism. Their position is about the same as that of other Christians, except that Moslem converts were subject frequently to persecutions of various sorts from relatives and former friends. In parts of Iran it is still a hazardous thing to forsake the faith of Islam for that of Christ, but the general feeling against apostasy has greatly diminished.

The Jews have been an element in the Iranian population since the time of the Captivity, and although they are distinctively Jewish in faith, tradition, and domestic life, in physical appearance they are hardly to be distinguished from the Persians.

In Hamadan, which for many years was suspected to be the ancient Ecbatana, summer capital of the Medes and Persians, the Jews maintain and revere what are asserted to be the tombs of Esther and Mordecai of Biblical history. Because of the lack of any archaeological evidence, the belief that Hamadan was

the site of the ancient Ecbatana rested almost entirely upon the existence of this Jewish colony and its tradition. During the 1930's, however, exploratory shafts were sunk in the neighborhood, and the evidence unearthed has confirmed for most scholars what until then could only be surmised from tradition; and so, in this case, are shown the importance and endurance of tradition.

The Jews have in general suffered greater disabilities than the Christians, partly because the Jews, unlike the Christians, have not enjoyed the jealous interest in their welfare on the part of powerful nations. In the old days a Jew could not go in the streets in wet weather lest he contaminate one of the Faithful. In general, however, anti-Semitism has languished in modern times, though considerable revival of this feeling occurred during the period of Hitlerian ascendancy in Europe, when many Iranians adopted the views of the Germans.

The Guebers are adherents to the ancient Zoroastrian faith, descendants of those who refused to accept Islam at the time of the Mohammedan invasion. The greater number of them fled to India, where they comprise today the wealthy and influential sect of Parsees most generally congregated around Bombay. Those who remained in Iran have for centuries suffered various disabilities because of their faith, but after the ascendancy of Riza Shah Pahlavi their condition was greatly ameliorated. It was the policy of Riza Shah Pahlavi to revive the national spirit by recalling the ancient glories, and as the Parsees represented the purest strains of the pre-Islamic Persians and adhered to the ancient faith of Darius and Cyrus, they suddenly acquired new esteem and received the paternal interest of the State.

Under the Constitution of Iran, while Islam is declared to be the State religion, and Farsi the official language, all religions are tolerated and receive the protection of the State. The restrictions and disabilities endured by the several religious minorities are due less to official policy than to the influence of the Islamic clergy.

### III

## POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

### A. POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS

THE MOST famous palace in Teheran, now used only for State occasions, is the Gulistan, or Rose Garden palace. In a series of great vaulted rooms opening onto the courtyard—a lovely garden with a pool surrounded by plane and poplar and cypress trees—are contained some of the most priceless treasures of Iran, if not of the world. Among these treasures are the famous Peacock Throne, brought by the conqueror Nadir Shah from the sack of Delhi in 1739, covered with gold and studded with precious gems, together with a second throne equally as gorgeous and as opulently jeweled. The casual visitor may stroll through the Gulistan and examine these masterpieces of the jeweler's art, as well as the many other treasures displayed in glass cases along the walls. A few uniformed attendants may be found standing about, but no armed guards. Even during the occupation of Iran by foreign troops in World War II, when the government was weak, its sovereignty uncertain, and at times a condition bordering on anarchy prevailed, the Gulistan stood open, negligently, or indulgently, watched over by its dingily clad guardians.

There is significance in this. The Peacock Throne is a symbol of the national greatness. It is protected by the same spirit of reverence that guards the furniture of a church, the sacred vessels of a temple. So long as the people prize their national history, so long may the Peacock Throne stand under its casual guard in the Gulistan; conversely, so long as the Peacock Throne stands under its casual guard one may be sure that the Iranian people still preserve and prize their nationhood. It is of interest that a neighboring power, which has not hesitated to filch a province when occasion offered, has never gone so far as to seize the Peacock Throne or the Crown jewels.

While the Peacock Throne thus symbolizes the national tra-

dition, it also signifies the monarchical institution. The monarchy may eventually disappear in favor of a republic, but the temperament and tradition of the people suggest that its abolition would be undertaken with the same reluctance with which the Peacock Throne would be melted down for its metal and precious gems.

The place of the throne in Iranian political life is not easy for a Westerner to comprehend. Until the twentieth century, the monarchical concept in Iran had been one of absolutism. This absorption of all sovereignty in the personal hands of the king was a concept dating from Achaemenian times, from the days of the first empire of the Medes and Persians. This respect for sovereignty existed despite the fact that almost any person could aspire to the throne, and many times in history it fell into the hands of lucky adventurers. Between the sovereign and the people stood no intermediate class or interest, such as the nobility and the merchant guilds that restrained the medieval princes of Europe. This has been generally true throughout Iranian history, despite the powerful influence exerted by the clergy—the Magis in ancient times, the mullahs since the advent of Islam—and the not insignificant influence of the merchant class.

Likewise, as in the days of the Roman Empire, no principle of succession was ever established, though the crown usually descended within the family and was regarded as a family possession. However, as polygamy was customary, and as the various sovereigns, unlike the Roman, usually had a numerous progeny, the question of the succession often became a cause for sanguinary contest among the various sons. The history of the Iranian monarchy, as with most Oriental monarchies, is a repetition of parricide, filicide, fratricide: instances without number exist of whole families slain in order to make sure the throne. Mutilations and castrations of rivals were common.

The tradition of absolutism prevented any development of institutions or customary law even faintly resembling the system that appeared in Europe during medieval times. The structure of society became feudal, the feudal aristocracy was equally at the mercy of the throne, with the effect that even in modern times the landowning class, while economically powerful, remained politically subservient.

*Inherent Tradition of Freedom*

The nomadic tribes stood in a somewhat different relation to the throne. Among them existed a strong customary law, with a strong sense of personal freedom and independence. Leadership of the tribe, while frequently confined to a family succession, usually went by election or by general consent of the elders. The tribe dealt as a unit with the throne, and in exchange for a stated tribute to the State, including the supply of armed contingents, retained its traditional privileges.

The autocratic Mongols, for instance, never reduced the Lurs and the Kurds to more than nominal allegiance, and from the eleventh to the sixteenth century they were governed by their own *atabegs*. With the rise of the Persian Safavid dynasty, they were brought again into the political system; the Safavids and succeeding dynasties cultivated the support of the tribes, and chiefly relied upon them, rather than upon the landed nobility, for their military levies, and as late as the nineteen twenties the tribal contingents constituted the main element in the military forces of the Empire.

Among the tribesmen, therefore, as in villages remote from the capital, the typical attitude towards the throne was one of indifference if not disdain—an attitude well expressed by the following quatrain from the *Rubaiyat*, true today as it was nine centuries ago:

With me along the strip of Herbage strown  
That just divides the desert from the sown,  
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot—  
And Peace to Mahmúd on his Golden Throne!

Thus despite the long tradition of absolutism, there existed an equally tenacious tradition of personal freedom and independence. The significance of this is considerable: it explains the paradox by which a people among whom the system of monarchic absolutism has been the most ancient in the East became the first people of the East to throw off the system in favor of parliamentary government. It explains, moreover, the relative facility with which they became accustomed to parliamentary government, and the relative virility which it has manifested in succeeding crises. More will be said later about



this early ripened vigor and its manifestations; for the moment a brief survey of the constitutional movement is appropriate.

## B. THE CONSTITUTIONAL MOVEMENT

Coincident with the abortive Russian Revolution of 1905 a revolution occurred in Iran, but with greater success and with less bloodshed. Muzaffar-ed-Din Shah, who had come to the throne ten years before, was weak and corrupt: he had dissipated the revenues of the State and had mortgaged the national resources by foreign loans and grants of concessions. In 1905, demonstrations took place, instigated by the bazaar and the clergy. A customary form of protest, besides that of closing the bazaars in boycott, was that of taking *bast*, or 'sanctuary, in one of the shrines; in 1906, the leading *mujtahids* enforced their demands for reform by retiring in a body to the shrine of Fatima at Qum, and further by threatening to exile themselves to Turkish territory. Since the *mujtahids* administered the Koranic law, and thus constituted the principal judicial body, this was tantamount to an interdict.

Meantime, a still larger demonstration was occurring in Teheran. This was the famous *bast* in which over twelve thousand merchants and others camped in the grounds of the British legation and refused to leave until a code of laws had been granted. As a result of the mediation of the British minister, the Shah issued a rescript granting a national assembly. This was on 5 August 1906; the assembly convened in October and drew up a constitution, which was ratified at once.

Muzaffar-ed-Din Shah died within a few days after the promulgation of the Constitution. The terms of the Constitution did not seriously restrict the power of the shah, but they did provide for a consultative assembly, known as the Majlis. Muzaffar-ed-Din's successor, his son, Mohammed Ali Shah, a despot of the worst type, promptly undertook to nullify the instrument. In December, he attempted a *coup d'état*, which failed.

The success of the parliamentary regime encouraged the Turks to a similar movement, and in 1908 the 'Young Turks' obtained the restoration of the constitution which Sultan

Abdul Hamid had granted on his accession in 1876, but had promptly annulled.

The spread of democratic institutions on the borders of the Russian Empire caused great uneasiness in Moscow, and in 1908 Mohammed Ali Shah was persuaded to a new effort to overthrow the Constitution. With the aid of the Cossacks<sup>1</sup> and their Russian commander, he bombed the parliament building and dispersed the Majlis. The result was widespread reaction. In Azerbaijan the people revolted and the Shah had to send troops to besiege the provincial capital Tabriz. This siege was lifted when the Russians sent forces and intervened. Meantime, the Bakhtiari tribes under the leadership of Haj Ali Kuli Khan, Sardar-i-Asad, assembled in force and marched on the capital. Teheran was captured in July 1909; the Shah was deposed, and his 12-year-old son, Sultan Ahmad, was placed on the throne under a regency. Mohammed Ali Shah retired to Odessa under a pension from the government, payable so long as he remained out of politics, and the Russian government undertook to keep him under surveillance. In 1911, however, he made a further attempt to regain his throne and with Russian aid mustered a force at Astrabad; this attempt also failed.

Throughout the regency and subsequent reign of Sultan Ahmad Shah (1909-25), though the power of the government progressively decayed, the legal sovereignty of the Majlis within the government was unchallenged. Sultan Ahmad Shah suffered from obesity; he seemed, moreover, to be in constant fear of his life, and during the latter years of his reign spent much of his time in Europe. In the early years of the Constitution, the government was dominated by the Bakhtiari chiefs, who had been instrumental in securing the Constitution, but by 1912 their influence had been removed. The troubles that beset parliamentary government in Iran were not only the lack of political preparation among the people, but the failure of the Constitution to provide either a fundamental law or a system of administration under law. An elec-

<sup>1</sup> This was an Iranian military body that had been created in 1882, but it had always been officered by Russians, and was under Russian influence.

tive assembly of one hundred thirty-six deputies was instituted, but no election procedures were laid down.<sup>2</sup>

Power remained with various cliques in Teheran which, through control of the prime ministry, effectively disposed of public offices. The administration of the provinces remained largely unchanged; the provincial governors were practically absolute in their exercise of power, and the system of farming out offices to the highest bidder, which had prevailed since antiquity, was hardly modified.

From 1909 until 1925, the rule of Iran was exercised by a succession of prime ministers and ministerial cliques—always however, with the nominal consent of the Majlis. This was a period of political impotence, economic stagnation and declining prestige, in which Russian imperialism pressed for hegemony.

The fact that Iranian sovereignty did not disappear during this period is attributable to a number of factors. One of these was British diplomacy, which was interested in keeping Iran independent as a protection to British sovereignty in India. A second reason was the influence of world opinion stirred up in 1911 by the ultimatum issued to Iran by the Russian government regarding the American, W. Morgan Shuster, the incidents of which will be described later. A third factor was, of course, the sudden collapse of Russian power during the Revolution. A fourth factor was British inability, due to war weariness and the unwillingness of the British public to support further imperialistic activities, to fill the vacuum created by the Russian withdrawal. A fifth factor, the actual strength of which is now in the balance, is the virility of the national spirit of the Iranian people, of which the Majlis, however feeble, continued to be the political expression.

Whatever may be the ultimate destiny of Iran, the remarkable fact is that the Majlis, despite what may appear to Western eyes to be a travesty of the processes of democracy, not

<sup>2</sup> Ignorance of democratic procedures produced some ludicrous, as well as tragic, results. During an election in Riza Shah Pahlavi's reign (1937) the students in one of the mission schools were directed by the police to assemble and proceed *en masse* to the polling place. There, each of them was provided with a folded slip of paper and told to drop it in the ballot box. One of the students started to unfold his slip, but was cautioned by the police not to do so. 'This is a secret ballot,' the policeman explained.

only survived but to a large extent became the vocal expression of the spirit of the people. Whatever may be said of corruption, of nominal elections, of political ineptitude, when the record of the Iranian parliament is placed beside the condition and theory of monarchic absolutism, a fair and reasonable judgment must accord the Iranian people respect for the manner in which they adopted constitutional principles and continued to enlarge the application and strengthen the structure of parliamentary government. The success of the Iranian people in achieving constitutional government this early, and with so little bloodshed, is a phenomenon that has been overlooked by the world, even as it amazed students of Middle Eastern politics.

### C. FOREIGN IMPERIALISM

The major factor in the modern political history of Iran has been the glacial-like movement southward of the political mass on the north; and whether Iran survives as an independent sovereignty will depend upon whether the force of that movement is melted by the sun of a more temperate international order or is blasted away by force.

The policy of southward expansion was promulgated in the early eighteenth century by Peter the Great, and that policy has since been consistently pursued by successive tsars, and more recently by the Soviet government of Russia. The policies that Peter the Great promulgated for posterity are contained in the famous will he is supposed to have left. This will was published in Europe in 1755 by the Chevalier d'Eon, who claimed to have obtained a copy while acting as reader to Catherine the Great, and though it has been challenged as spurious, the evidence is that it has been accepted in Russia as a political charter. Regarding Iran, this document states:

IX. To approach as near as possible to Constantinople and India . . . consequently excite continuous wars, not only in Turkey, but in Persia. . . And in the decadence of Persia, penetrate as far as the Persian Gulf.

Even before the time of Peter the Great, however, the Muscovites had been covetous of the shahs' dominions. In 1668,

according to Chardin, the Grand Duke of Muscovy had picked a quarrel with the Shah and had invaded Mazanderan as far as the northern capital of Ferahabad.<sup>8</sup> Peter also had not contented himself with advice, but before the end of his reign had made a bold attempt to possess the entire Caspian region.

At that time the dominion of the shahs extended as far as the Caucasus mountains and was defended on the north by this formidable barrier. The Shah, however, had fallen into difficulties with his neighbors to the east, the Afghans, who in 1722 had penetrated as far as Isfahan, his principal capital. Seizing upon this opportunity, Peter assembled an army at the mouth of the Volga, sailed down the coast and attacked the port of Derbend. The city fell, and Peter proceeded along the coast towards Baku. At this juncture he was met by the Ottoman ambassador who warned him of a Turkish attack unless he withdrew.

A year later, Peter resumed his enterprise by attacking Resht, on the southern coast of the Caspian. The province of Gilan fell into his hands and later in the year Baku was taken. The Shah now came to an understanding with Peter whereby, in return for aid against the Afghans, the towns and dependencies of Derbend and Baku, as well as the provinces of Gilan, Mazanderan, and Astrabad, were ceded to Russia.

Subsequently, however, the Caspian provinces were surrendered, although Baku and Derbend were retained. This may have been due to Peter's death in 1725, following which the Russians became embroiled in domestic dissension over the succession. The insalubrity of the southern Caspian climate may have been a factor, as well as the rise of the powerful and war-like Nadir Shah.

In 1813, war again broke out between Russia and Iran, and again in 1827. By the Treaty of Gulistan, in 1813, which concluded the first of these wars, Russia acquired the quasi-independent territories of Georgia, Imeritia, and Mingrelia, in the Caucasus, as well as Daghestan, Shirvan, Ganjeh, Karabagh, and parts of Talish, more properly Iranian dominion, while Russia was given the sole privilege of maintaining ves-

<sup>8</sup> Chardin, Sir John, *Coronation of Solyman III* (printed as Supplement to his *Travels*), pp. 152-4, cited in Curzon, op. cit. vol. I, p. 186.

sels of war on the Caspian Sea. The Treaty of Turkomanchai, signed in 1828, which concluded the latter war, ceded to Russia the Armenian districts of Erivan, Nakhitchivan, and a war indemnity of thirty million silver rubles, or approximately \$15,000,000. A commercial treaty was also concluded which limited the customs Iran could levy to an ad valorem 5 per cent.

The Treaty of Turkomanchai is significant in Iranian history, for by it attributes of sovereignty were taken from the government which were not restored for a hundred years, among those being the power to fix its own customs dues, and to execute law and justice on all within its territory. This latter cession, known in Turkey under the name of Capitulations, granted the Russian consuls either joint or absolute jurisdiction in all civil and criminal cases involving a Russian subject. These privileges were extended as a matter of course to other foreign powers, and the fixing of customs tariffs also became a matter of negotiation and agreement with other powers maintaining relations with the Iranian government. The re-establishment of customs autonomy and the abolition of the Capitulatory privileges were finally achieved by Riza Shah Pahlavi in 1927 and 1928.

Ten years after the Treaty of Turkomanchai, without the formality of declaring war, Russia seized the island of Ashurada, at the mouth of Astrabad Bay, and established a naval base there. Subsequently, other points on the Persian Caspian were seized, including Hasan Kuli Bay, Chikishliar, Cheleken Bay, and Balkan Bay.<sup>4</sup>

### *British Interests in Iran*

Russian aggressive tactics now subsided, partly because of preoccupation elsewhere, principally in expansion in Trans-Caspia and elsewhere in Asia, partly because of the vigor of Nasr-ed-Din Shah, who came to the throne in 1848 and ruled until 1896, partly because of increasing British activity in defense of their interests in that part of the world. Following the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, India, which had formerly been governed through the East India Company, was formally incorporated into the British Empire, and British influence be-

<sup>4</sup> Curzon, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 393.

came ascendant in Afghanistan. From the time of Shah Abbas, British merchants and British diplomacy had been active in Iran, and in 1800 a treaty had been signed with the Shah guaranteeing him aid in case of attack by the Afghans or by the French. Throughout Nasr-ed-Din Shah's reign, relations between Afghanistan and Iran were strained, and several wars occurred. Earlier, during the war of 1837, the British had intervened and occupied Kharak Island in the Persian Gulf, but later they had evacuated it. In 1856, on the occasion of the second Perso-Afghan war, Great Britain declared war on Iran and again seized Kharak, as well as Bushire, but once more evacuated these places at the conclusion of peace. These are the only instances of armed hostilities between Great Britain and Iran.

During the reign of Muzaffar-ed-Din Shah (1896-1906) and during the impotency of Iran following the establishment of the Constitution, Russian penetration became more pronounced. In 1907, as a means of restraining Russian expansion throughout Asia, and as a part in the total pattern of European politics by which the Triple Entente was formed among Britain, France, and Russia to counter Germany, a series of agreements was negotiated with Russia by Great Britain delimiting the respective spheres of influence of the two powers in Central Asia. The agreement with regard to Iran is known as the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Although the powers professed every respect for Iranian independence, and denied any intention of interfering in the internal administration, the Convention divided the country into two spheres of influence with a neutral belt between, and provided that neither of the two powers should seek privileges in the sphere of the other.

The Russian sphere embraced all the productive northern half of the country, including Azerbaijan, the Caspian provinces, and Khorasan; it extended southward as far as Kermanshah and Isfahan; all the principal cities of Iran were within the Russian sphere, except Dizful, Shustar, Shiraz, and Kirman. The British sphere consisted of the southeastern desert bordering on Baluchistan, in which the only city of importance was Kirman. The chief advantage to Great Britain was that it excluded Russian influence from the Persian Gulf littoral, the

control of which was of paramount importance to the security of India.

The Anglo-Russian Convention failed to accomplish its purpose of curbing Russian infringement on Iranian sovereignty. In 1910 occurred the famous Potsdam Agreement between Germany and Russia, by which Germany agreed to support Russian imperialism in Iran in exchange for similar support of German expansion in the Ottoman Empire. Russia therefore promptly resumed her aggression towards Iran. In 1911 the Russians encouraged and assisted the exiled Mohammed Ali Shah in an attempt to regain his throne. He was permitted to leave Odessa and to land at Astrabad with a consignment of arms and ammunition labeled 'mineral waters.' Moreover, to intimidate Persian resistance, the Russian legation announced that under its Capitulatory privileges it would arrest 'illegal Russian subjects who might take part in the events actually going on in the country'—a device that permitted the legation to arrest loyal Iranians who were supporting the Constitution on the pretext that they were suspected of being Russian subjects.<sup>5</sup> This whole attempt was, however, a failure.

### *The Shuster Incident*

The Iranian government, meantime, in an effort to improve its administrative structure, had applied to the American government for the services of a financial adviser. W. Morgan Shuster was recommended and was engaged as Treasurer General of Iran, with extensive powers, and in May 1911 arrived in Iran with a group of assistants. The Russian government had informally protested to the American government against the appointment and promptly undertook to discourage Shuster's mission.

One of Shuster's measures that antagonized the Russians was his establishment of a special Treasury gendarmerie, charged with enforcing the internal administration of the country, primarily in connection with the collection of the taxes. At the time, the principal military force at the disposal of the government was the Russian-officered Cossack Brigade. Shuster

<sup>5</sup> Shuster, W. Morgan, *The Strangling of Persia*, New York, 1912, p. 109.



offered to a young Englishman the appointment as head of the gendarmerie. To this the Russians violently objected, as 'not compatible with their interests,' and the British legation co-operatively ordered the Englishman out of the country.

In the midst of these events occurred the attempt of Mohammed Ali Shah to regain his throne. With its failure, the Majlis ordered the confiscation of the estates of the ringleaders in the plot, including those of Shua-u-Saltana, the ex-shah's brother. The Russian legation declared a protectorate over these properties and posted a guard. This guard Shuster had the temerity to remove. There promptly followed a Russian ultimatum demanding an apology from the government, which was given, followed in November by a second ultimatum, demanding Shuster's dismissal.

A national uprising was provoked by these ultimatums, the second of which the Majlis rejected with the cry of 'Death or Independence,' and Russian forces stationed in Tabriz and Resht were attacked by the populace. In reprisal, Russian troops moved down on Tabriz, bombarded the city, massacred several hundred people, hanged several of the principal citizens, and threatened further to move on to Teheran. Typical of the spirit of resistance shown by the people was the appearance before the Majlis of a delegation of three hundred women, carrying revolvers under their shroud-like black garb; tearing aside their veils they declared their intention to kill their own husbands and sons and to leave behind their own dead bodies if the Majlis wavered in its duty of upholding the liberty and dignity of the Iranian people and nation.<sup>6</sup>

When neither threats nor bribes availed against the Majlis, Russia undertook to destroy the government by force, and on 24 December 1911, engineered a *coup d'état* by which the Majlis was dispersed. Shuster accepted the inevitable and left Iran early in January 1912.

In the south, the British had not been inactive in maintaining their interests against the Russians. While the Russians were marching about in northern Iran, the British had, on 10 October 1910, complained of the insecurity of the roads in the south, and practically demanded that a number of officers

<sup>6</sup> Shuster, *op. cit.* p. 198.

of the British-Indian army be placed in charge of the policing of these roads under the general supervision of the British government, the expense to be met from the Iranian customs revenues.<sup>7</sup> The British, however, had supported Shuster's proposal for the establishment of a gendarmerie (though not agreeing to the British officers), and as a result the gendarmerie, under Swedish officers, came into being—somewhat to Russian irritation.

The effect of the Shuster incident on British public opinion was to awaken it to the casuistry of the Anglo-Russian Convention and to produce a revulsion against British policy in Iran. Shuster's book, *The Strangling of Persia*, produced repercussions also in the United States. As a result of all this the Anglo-Russian Convention was allowed quietly to lapse, so far as British policy was concerned. In Iran, Shuster had become a national hero, revered to this day.

Russian interference persisted, however, and in March 1912, the Russians, determined to assert their power, found in eastern Iran—as they had in Tabriz the preceding December—a pretext for military action, in the course of which they bombarded the revered shrine of the Imam Riza at Meshed, and badly damaged its famous golden dome.

#### D. IRAN DURING WORLD WAR I

Such was the condition when World War I broke out. The government of Iran was helpless, disorganized, and bankrupt, and a sense of despair possessed the people. Since the revolutionary troubles of 1909, Russian troops had been stationed in Tabriz and elsewhere in northwestern Persia. This territory now became the theater of operations between Turks and Russians. In January 1915, Tabriz was captured by the Turks, only to be recaptured by the Russians. The Urmiah plain was devastated by Turks and Kurds, the Christian Nestorians slain or dispersed.

In the south, Great Britain had begun operations against the Turks in Mesopotamia in order to protect the oil fields and works of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and in November

<sup>7</sup> Shuster, op. cit. p. liv.

1914, Basra was captured; but British power was too weak to drive farther. In 1915, Turkish and German detachments moved up the Darian highway from Baghdad as far as Kermanshah in Iran, and a German mission was dispatched overland to Afghanistan.

In 1916, both Russia and Great Britain raised local levies to maintain a defense line against Turko-German advances. The Russians employed the existing Cossack Brigade, which was enlarged and re-equipped; the British created a new organization known as the South Persia Rifles. By 1917 these forces, nominally Iranian, but actually under Russian and British control, were in effective occupation of all Iran, and with the incorporation of the Swedish-officered gendarmerie into the British forces, in 1917, there disappeared the last military force at the disposal of the Iranian government. Iran had for all purposes ceased to exist as an independent nation.

Thus, during World War I, the sovereignty of Iran was violated with less compunction than that of Belgium, and with probably greater loss of life and property and disorganization of society. The most fertile province in all Iran, the Urmiah plain, was devastated, hundreds of prosperous villages depopulated, the orchards cut down, the water canals broken in, and a hundred thousand refugees left to wander about the country. The Urmiah district remains to this day semi-depopulated, its prosperity gone, its landscape showing ruins of once fertile villages, now sterile and lonely.

Despite the justness of their claims for restitution and indemnity, the Versailles Peace Conference, which was to establish a new justice in the world and a respect for small nations, declined, on the insistence of the British delegates, to admit the Iranian representatives or permit them to state their case. Collateral reasons for the refusal of the Conference to admit the Iranian delegates were the extravagance of the claims they were advancing and the fact that Iran had not been a belligerent.

In 1917, Russian power in Iran had collapsed as a result of the Russian Revolution, and while Great Britain hurriedly attempted to fill the political and military void this event created, the attempt never quite succeeded. In January 1918, a force was dispatched from Baghdad northward by way of

Iran in an effort to anticipate the Turks and Germans who were driving into the Caucasus. While British forces eventually reached Baku, they subsequently withdrew, and never succeeded in establishing in northern Iran a hegemony comparable to that which the Russians had abandoned.

Iranian nationalism began to reassert itself in 1918, stirred by the Russian debacle and by German successes at arms; and British overtures to an Irano-British *rapprochement*, made in March 1918, were rejected. The British government had proposed that the South Persia Rifles be recognized as an Iranian force and that British troops be allowed to occupy Azerbaijan until the end of the war; the British further conceded the abrogation of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. The effect of the Iranian rejection of these terms was to cause defections from the Iranian-recruited South Persia Rifles, which had been the principal stabilizing force in the south, and at the same time to invite a rising of the southern tribes led by the Kashgais. This opposition to British authority was not quelled until the end of the year.

The end of the war established a new orientation in Iran. Russian influence had disappeared, and British influence, while resisted by the Iranians, was unchallenged elsewhere. A British emissary arrived in Teheran and presented a new proposal to the Iranian government: this was the ill-fated Anglo-Persian Agreement which was negotiated in August 1919. Like so many diplomatic documents, it seemed innocent in its purposes and terms. After reiterating respect for the independence and integrity of Iran, it provided that the British government would supply expert advisers to the Iranian government, whose powers and emoluments were, however, to be a matter of negotiation between that government and the advisers. The British government also undertook to supply officers, and such munitions and equipment as a joint commission should recommend, for the re-establishment of the Iranian army; to arrange for a loan to the Iranian government; and to co-operate in other ways in the restoration of Iranian economy and the development of Anglo-Iranian enterprise. In connection with the signing of the Agreement, a loan of £2,000,000 was offered, and the British government further undertook to co-operate in

obtaining an indemnity for the losses sustained by Iran as a result of the war.

The announcement of the Agreement was received with hostility in Iran and with suspicion abroad, not only in the United States and France, but among the British public. It seemed an extension of British imperialism, and the British public in particular was weary of further adventure of this sort. Lord Curzon was at the time foreign minister of Great Britain and his imperialistic views were well known. What contributed further to this apprehension, no doubt, was the atmosphere in which the Agreement had been negotiated. It has been widely charged that the signatures to the document were obtained by bribery, and leaders of British opinion, among them Lord Grey of Fallodon, complained that the Agreement should have been submitted to the League of Nations.

While the Majlis, which still retained its constitutional prerogatives, dallied with ratification, Iranian public opinion began to ferment. Under pressure from home, the British government began to withdraw its forces from Iran. Meantime, the new Soviet government of Russia had become active in protecting its position in Iran. In June 1919, it had issued a declaration by which it renounced all imperialistic ambitions in Iran, abrogated all concessions held by the Imperial government or its subjects, with the exception of the Caspian fisheries concession, and annulled all debts of the Iranian government to the Russian. While denouncing tsarist imperialism, however, it began steadily to reoccupy the domains that successive tsars had brought under Russian suzerainty. In 1920 and 1921, the independent republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan,<sup>8</sup> and Armenia, which had been established in the Caucasus during the Revolution, were conquered and extinguished, and on 18 May 1920, a Red fleet appeared off Persian Enzeli,<sup>9</sup> bombarded the city, and forced the retirement of the British, who were still in occupation. On 6 June 1920, following the further withdrawal of the British, the city of Resht, capital of the province of Gilan, was occupied, and a Soviet Republic of Gilan proclaimed.

<sup>8</sup> Caucasian Azerbaijan, not to be confused with Iranian Azerbaijan, though at one time part of the Iranian Empire.

<sup>9</sup> Now Pahlavi.

It was at this point that Riza Khan, a colonel in the Cossack Brigade stationed at Kasvin, and a man of high intelligence and of imperial bearing, entered the scene of history. The situation in the capital was chaotic; the government was impotent; the British forces, upon which public order rested, were leaving the country; and the Russians were moving in. Early in 1921, fears of possible Russian occupation produced a state of panic. Riza Khan had attacked the Soviets with his forces and had been defeated. Emissaries—and according to reports, these emissaries were representatives of the British legation—<sup>10</sup> went to Kasvin and urged Riza Khan to move his forces to Teheran and take over the government.

While this was going on, the British legation was pressing the matter of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. The prime minister of Iran reluctantly summoned the Majlis to convene on 20 February 1921 to consider ratification.

On 21 February, Riza Khan appeared in Teheran with his troops, seized the government, and arrested the members of the cabinet. Seyyid Zia-ed-Din, a well-known Anglophile, was named prime minister, and Riza Khan became minister of war and commander of the army.

The unexpected, though not unprecedented, result of this *coup d'état* was that five days later the Majlis summarily rejected the Anglo-Persian Agreement, and on the same day the new government signed an agreement with Soviet Russia. This agreement reiterated the Russian self-denying declaration of the year earlier and confirmed the annulment of Russian concessions and other claims in Iran, with the exception of the Caspian Sea fisheries. It stipulated, however, that none of the surrendered concessions should be granted to any foreign interest without Russian permission. More significantly, as events revealed, it reserved the right to intervene in Iran, or occupy the country, if necessary for the defense of Russia.

The British completed their evacuation of Iran early in 1921, except for the southeastern desert, which was not evacuated

<sup>10</sup> See Filmer, Henry, *The Pageant of Persia*, Indianapolis, 1936, p. 344. Filmer quotes Emile Lesueur (*Les Anglais en Perse*, Paris, 1922), to the effect that an official of the British Legation distributed money to the troops under Riza Khan as an inducement to move. M. Lesueur was a professor teaching in Teheran at the time.

until 1924, and shortly afterwards the Soviet occupation of Gilan province ceased. Iran was now, for the first time in over twenty years, free of foreign troops on its soil, and though the country was prostrate from the effects of military devastation: famine, disease, disruption of communications, and governmental impotence, the national spirit was resurgent, and the scene was prepared for a new era of national development.

A summary of the history from 1900 to 1920 would indicate the following principal characteristics: (a) the gradual strengthening of democratic processes, accompanied by a renewed vitality of the national spirit of Iran; (b) a corresponding decay in governmental administration, a fact which may be attributed in part to unfamiliarity with democratic processes, in part to persistent foreign intervention; and (c) the continued pressure on the part of Russia, aided to a considerable extent by Great Britain, to reduce the people to a state of vassalage. The later political history of Iran will be surveyed in subsequent chapters.

## IV

### LIVELIHOOD

THE TRADITIONAL economy of Iran has been highly fortunate for the Iranian people, but that economy has been disappearing. That is to say, the Iranian people required little for their sustenance that they did not themselves produce, while on the other hand they produced certain articles that were highly regarded and in constant demand throughout the world. Today, Iran is rapidly approaching a condition in which its merchants demand everything from the outside world and have very little to offer in exchange.

#### A. PASTORAL LIVELIHOOD

Such generalizations of course require qualification. The mass of the Iranian people follows a primitive pastoral and agricultural pattern of life. Out of an estimated population of 16 million, not more than 20 per cent live in cities of more than 10,000 population, of which there are not more than 50. (In the United States more than 47½ per cent of the population lives in towns of 10,000 or more population.) Some 3 to 5 million of the inhabitants follow a pastoral life. These are the nomadic tribesmen. Because of the nature of their occupation, their mode of life is simple and their wants are correspondingly limited. While their living standards are low by comparison with those of the American town, village, and countryside, they are probably better fed and clothed than many cotton farmers of the Deep South, the miners of the remoter Appalachian valleys, or the hillmen of Kentucky.

The reason is that while their means are limited they have not lost the skill of hand to turn their few materials to account. For example, from the milk of their flocks they make a number of products: butter, cheese, and *mast*—this last, a fermentation of milk which has in recent years been introduced to the



American market as Bulgarian buttermilk or under its Turkish name of *yoghurt*, and which is often prescribed for infants and invalids because of its easy digestibility and nutritional qualities. Milk products are supplemented by goat's meat and mutton, eaten perhaps twice a week, and wild herbs. Many of the semi-nomadic tribes cultivate the ground for wheat, barley, and vegetables; the pure nomads obtain cereals by barter. Their chief requirement from the outside is tea to drink and sugar to sweeten the tea. For clothing, they weave interesting and durable fabrics of the wool from their flocks. While the brightly printed calicoes from abroad are popular among them, and may be preferred to their own hand-loomed fabrics, these are novelties that certainly are not equal in beauty or utility to their own weaves. Their goat's-hair tents are superior to any canvas the looms of the West can offer, and their carpets of course provide an adornment that would add to the beauty of the most comfortably established household of the West. Firearms and cutlery are in great demand among the tribesmen, but the firearms could well be foregone, if conditions of greater political security and justice prevailed.

Of the myriad interesting and useful objects of commerce which the West produces, few are designed for life among the tents.<sup>1</sup> A good portable radio, for instance, would be a great boon to life in the lonely hills, but an automobile cannot follow the paths the tribesmen must take with their flocks. Saddles and harnesses might find a market, except that these are made quite satisfactorily by the leather workers of the encampment. The nomads are desperately in want of good doctors—but doctors are not an article of trade—and medicines, but until they have physicians to administer the medicines they are almost as well off with the curative herbs familiar to them as with the patent nostrums that find their way into export trade.<sup>2</sup> They need education—but not the kind that is represented by books, magazines, advertising brochures that ordi-

<sup>1</sup> An equally valid statement would be, of course, that the nomadic life is not one designed to utilize the myriad interesting articles that industrialism produces.

<sup>2</sup> Some exceptions exist. A number of proprietary drugs are now finding their way to Iran which are self-administerable and which are specifics for numerous ailments, particularly skin diseases such as favus.

narily find their way into export trade. They need teachers and advisers who have a sympathetic understanding of their traditions and intellectual and moral requirements; they need a particular sort of books that so far have been sent by only one institution of the outer world, the Church.

On the other hand, the tribesmen produce much that has a ready market throughout the world. Their carpets are among the finest woven in Iran, and that means the finest in the world. And the precious lambskins known as Persian, of which the Iranian tribesmen are a substantial supplier, are the standard of fine furs.

Besides these better-known articles of commerce are others not so well known, but of considerable importance in various departments of civilized life. Sheep casings—or sheep intestine—importantly employed in sausage making and in other applications, have been exported largely from Iran. Gum tragacanth, found as an exudation of a wilderness bush,<sup>8</sup> and gum-arabic, extracted from the *konar* tree, are articles gathered by the Iranian nomads and villagers to satisfy a demand from abroad. Another product that civilization seeks of the tribesmen is licorice root, employed largely in tobacco manufacture. Besides these, there are numerous herbs employed in pharmaceuticals.

#### B. AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOOD

The peasant class, which with the tribesmen composes the bulk of the population, exists by a simple and relatively self-sufficient system of livelihood in small villages, and farms the land by medieval methods of tillage. An ox is kept to draw the plow and to thresh the grain, a donkey to carry the produce to market, some sheep for wool and meat, some goats for milk, and always a flock of chickens. The stable is part of the house and the heat of the animals helps warm the home in winter. The flocks are pastured in common, and the oxen may be owned in common. The village, if substantial, may support a few craftsmen, such as the smith, the saddler; the potter, the barber, the baker, and the bath man. If large enough, it may also have a mosque and a mullah who, besides leading the

<sup>8</sup> The *astragalus*.

Friday prayers, will teach the children to recite the Koran (in Arabic) and to read and write. In the village there will also be the agent of the landlord, who supervises the gathering of the crops to make sure of the rental.

The land is farmed in strips, the strips being allocated afresh each year among the tenants. Crops are rotated, and the soil is fertilized with manure, ashes, and refuse. The grain is threshed on open floors by oxen treading the straw or by a primitive threshing machine, consisting of a roller about five feet long with wooden, or possibly iron, spikes spirally arranged on it; this revolves as the oxen draw it. Sometimes a machine resembling a sled, upon which is set a revolving paddle edged with flint stones, is used.

Despite these primitive methods, a wide variety of foodstuffs is produced. The diet of the villager and peasant consists variously of wheat and barley bread, millet porridge, eggs, milk and milk products, vegetables, and fruits.

The vegetables include beets, spinach, cabbage, cucumbers, asparagus, potatoes, as well as several varieties peculiar to Iran, such as the edible camel thorn, which is made into a sauce for *pilau* (steamed rice cooked with butter). The orchard crops have been mentioned earlier: almonds, walnuts, pistachios, and filberts among the nuts; peaches, pears, apricots, mulberries, quinces, cherries, pomegranates, among the fruits. The vines produce an abundance of melons, squash, pumpkins, and grapes. The grapes are either dried as raisins or pressed for the juice, which is boiled down into sirup to serve as sweetening or as a confection.

The peasants dress in cottons woven abroad or locally, and in cold weather, in woollens of their own weave, woolen felts, and sheepskins. The common shoe is a woven sandal, manufactured in the village.

Spinning and weaving dress goods, carpets, and other fabrics are common household industries. Though printed cottons from abroad are favored among them, as among the tribesmen, the typical wife still 'layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.' Wool is carded by pulling it over a pair of long-toothed combs. Wool and silk are still spun by a distaff whirled by hand, though a spinning wheel is sometimes used. In many villages in Gilan and Yezd, the principal

silk-growing regions, there are little shops where the silk is spun on a small machine. It is prepared for spinning by throwing the cocoons into a caldron of boiling water mixed with sour milk. A man turns a wheel, about a yard in diameter, with a foot treadle, with one hand stirs the cocoons to loosen the fibers, while with the other he draws up the threads to be wound about the wheel.

Despite these primitive methods of cultivation, the peasants of Iran have managed to produce a surplus for the market, which, sold abroad, has provided the means to pay for many of the foreign luxuries demanded by the more fortunate in the cities. Iran is exceeded only by the United States in exports of raisins, dried fruits, and nuts.<sup>4</sup> A small wheat surplus is also sold abroad in normal times. Tobacco of exceptional quality is grown, with a flavor and aroma not exceeded by the best Turkish, Macedonian, or American leaf, but, unfortunately for tobacco users, little finds its way into world trade. The opium poppy, which is found throughout Iran, but is cultivated chiefly in the south, provides an article of commerce in both licit and illicit trade, and is a source of great profit to smugglers, besides providing considerable revenue to the government, which maintains a nominal monopoly in the trade. The importance and the effects of opium growing will be discussed later.

From the outside world, in exchange for these products, the peasant obtains little beyond sugar and tea, since they are not produced locally in sufficient quantity to supply the demand. There is much, however, that he could use of the production of the West. He stands in pitiable need of good hand tools and simple farm implements. A steel plow to replace his forked stick (which is generally shod nowadays with an iron tip) would be a great boon and immensely increase his productivity. One energetic American sewing-machine company has cultivated the household market in Iran, and sewing machines monogrammed with a large S are to be found in every village. But for the most part the products of the West that find their way to Iran consist of articles of metropolitan and govern-

<sup>4</sup> Trade statistics indicate that Turkey may be a larger exporter of these products than Iran, but the Turkish figures are said to include considerable amounts of Iranian products received in Turkey for re-export.

ment demand: steel for railways and highways, factory machinery, electrical goods and equipment, automobiles, cameras, radios, silk hose, and cosmetics. I have walked along the principal streets of Teheran and have seen in the shops a variety of articles sufficient to stock an American department store: pocketknives, coat hangers, tooth paste, razor blades, alarm clocks, typewriters, yard goods, ready-made clothing, top hats, kitchenware, china and glass, furniture, electric lamps—but not a hoe, a rake, or a steel plowshare. This is partly due to the higher profit that the merchant realizes on goods of metropolitan demand, partly to the greater ease with which the metropolitan market can be cultivated; very largely it is due to the general neglect of the agricultural economy and obtuseness to its importance on the part of the ruling classes.

### C. WATER SUPPLY

Urgent among the agricultural needs of Iran is an adequate water supply. Everywhere, except along the Caspian coast, the rainfall is scanty. On the eastern tableland, as has been previously noted, the rain seldom exceeds 8 inches annually, while on the western tableland, the fall averages 15 inches. Most of this rainfall occurs in the autumn and winter months, though in the Urmiah plain in the northwest it is more evenly distributed. Winter wheat will generally head before the dry season, but for most crops irrigation is necessary.

In most parts of Iran, irrigation is the practice, but not water storage. Mountain streams, fed by melting snow, collect into small rivers; part of the water is diverted to the fields, while the balance flows into the desert and loses itself in saline marshes. Generally, however, the water flows off the mountains very much as water descends from a roof, and does not lend itself to collection or storage. In any case, as the season advances, the amount of water that courses down diminishes to a trickle. Cultivation accordingly is limited to crops that mature by midsummer. The principal method of water conservation and distribution, which has existed for centuries, has been to divert mountain springs into underground tunnels or water courses, called *kanats*, by which the water may be conducted as far as twenty-five miles into the plain. The cities

all receive their water supply by numerous *kanats*. These *kanats* offer the advantage of avoiding evaporation that would take place in open ditches and serve also to protect the water from contamination.

The *kanats* are not lined, since the soil structure is such that only moderate loss by seepage is incurred. As they are somewhat subject to obstruction by caving, they are provided with openings at intervals along the course so that workmen can enter the channels to clear them. As the excavated material accumulates about the openings, it presents from a height the appearance of a row of huge ant hills stretching across the desert from the base of the mountains to the village or city.

The *kanats* are usually the property of private individuals or companies. Some enterprising person will tap a stream and lead the water into the town and sell it at so much a 'finger,' that is, by measure. Householders and gardeners buy their water just as they do here, except that in most cases the supplying of the water is a commercial undertaking. The water seller provides the service of keeping the *kanats* open and water flowing.

In the villages the provision of the water may be one of the services of the landlord of the village, for which he receives a share—usually a fifth—of the crop. Enterprising landowners open up new water supplies and enlarge their villages, or establish new villages. The soil is rich, and wherever water can be brought abundant crops can be grown. In some villages the *kanats* are a hereditary property of the community. Since one *kanat* may serve several villages, a great cause of dissension and feuds between villages is the allocation of water rights.

The problem of water supply has been one of considerable interest to observers of the Iranian scene, and two schools of thought are maintained. One view is that the government should undertake great water conservation works, on the order of Hoover Dam and Grand Coulee Dam. The spectacular nature of such projects has made them intriguing to the government and ruling classes. A number of sites exist—though few for a country so vast as Iran—where the results would warrant the expenditure. The principal and most promising is in Khuzistan, where a great barrage across the Karun has been under construction by the government as a result of

British interest and stimulus. This is used as a means of increasing the food supply in the districts in which the oil fields are located, and where the general poverty of the agricultural classes is extreme.

Incidentally, a dam was thrown across the Karun by Shapur I (A.D. 241-72), using Roman engineers and workers taken as prisoners with the emperor, Valerian. It was constructed of blocks of granite cramped together, and was 570 yards long. This dam still exists, though in disrepair.

The disadvantage of such construction schemes, from the standpoint of the individual peasant, is that they are adapted to large-scale mechanical farming, and hence tend to foster the increase of great estates and reduce the cultivators to the status of mere employees. As it is today, while the greater part of the tillable soil is owned by absentee landowners, the parcels are relatively small and dispersed: the villagers may live in poverty but at least they enjoy a modicum of independence.

The other view of the water problem is that the water supply should be increased by what is called in this country 'farm ponds.' Rather than attempt the expensive process of impounding water in great reservoirs, the available funds should be devoted to a system of small dams and an extension of the traditional system of *kanats*. Such a method would seem more in accord with the physical characteristics of the land and would permit a wider dispersion of water-conservation works. This is the view of the able Professor Luther Winsor, American agricultural adviser to the government of Iran, as well as of Dr. Harold B. Allen, director of education of the Near East Foundation, who has extensively surveyed the agrarian problem in Iran with the object of instituting a number of model or demonstration villages under the auspices of the Foundation.

A further method of increasing the water supply, which has been receiving increasing attention from students, is that of tapping the underground water table. The extent of this underground water has not yet been determined, but it appears that in many districts it is abundant and fairly close to the surface. Where artesian wells do not result from boring, but the water must be pumped, it is recommended that wind power or motor power be employed. The winds of Iran are fairly constant: the



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southwestern and southeastern districts are noted for the 'one hundred twenty day' wind, and in Seistan the wind blows from one quarter for as long as two hundred days in the year. Wind-mills are ancient in Iran and may have been invented there. Records of them exist as early as the tenth century, and possibly the seventh. In addition to wind power, there are the abundant motor-fuel resources from the oil fields and the refineries of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and petroleum products are sold in Iran at prices cheaper than in Europe or Asia.

#### D. COMMUNICATIONS

A further need of the agricultural economy of Iran is roads. Since ancient times Iran has been a land of great trade routes. The first roads for wheeled traffic, as has been noted, were probably built in Iran. Among the works left for posterity by the early Achaemenian kings was a great system of imperial highways and post roads, and the rulers in subsequent eras of national resurgence, such as the Sassanian and the Safavid, have followed the Achaemenian road-building tradition. Road building became a dominant theme in the modern resurgence of Iran, the most ambitious undertaking having been a railway system, for which nearly nine hundred miles of rails were laid between 1925 and the outbreak of World War II. In addition, some fifteen thousand miles of motor highways were constructed.

#### *Roads*

The roads opened up the cities of Iran to the commerce of the world, and within two decades wisps of gasoline vapor were drifting across the wastes in all parts of Iran, and in remote hills the camels and donkeys were being driven off the roads by the honk of automobile horns.

What the peasants need, of course, more than highways by which their wheat and dried fruits may be borne to the ports and borders, and radios and pianos and glass chandeliers brought in (since they obtain few of the proceeds from the export and enjoy less of the articles of import), is a system of farm-to-market roads, by which they can reach the bazaar with their produce while it is still fresh ('with the flowers still

on them' as the cucumber peddler is wont to chant), and so that a drought and a short crop in one village may be remedied by a surplus in another.

### *Air Transport*

Of increasing importance in world traffic is air transport, and in this respect Iran possesses strategic values that are as yet unassayed. What routes the air traffic of the future will follow is still a matter of the new geography yet to be written, in which freight- and passenger-traffic potentials are balanced against 'great circle' distances, meteorological conditions, and, not least, the political configuration of the world. Certainly a territory as vast as Iran can hardly avoid being used one way or another in going from East to West, and one of the earliest air routes, that connecting the capital of the British Empire with India, which crossed the lower corner of Iran, produced a number of acrimonious negotiations between London and Teheran.

During World War II, when direct flying between western Europe and Russia was impossible, an enormous traffic to Russia was routed via Iran, but with normal conditions in Europe there would be no economic justification for this route. How important air routes to China via Iran will be in the future also remains to be seen.

So far as the livelihood of the Iranian people is concerned, however, though these great *rocs* of the present day may alight and rise at the principal cities, and their shadows glide swiftly over the Iranian landscape, it is not likely that this phenomenon will mean any more to the common man than possibly to frighten his lambs which mistake the shadows for those of preying eagles.

### *Telegraph*

Though modern road building has as yet hardly begun in Iran, it is an interesting fact that for many years all the principal localities of Iran have been connected by State-owned telegraph, which is supplemented today, in many of the cities, by radio communication. Iran had indeed a telegraph system extending throughout the country before it had an adequate postal system. The first telegraph line, constructed by the gov-

ernment, was laid in 1859 between Teheran and Sultanieh; in 1870, with the completion of the Indo-European telegraph lines in Iran, communication was afforded with London, all of Europe, and with India; and by 1892, the capital was able to communicate by telegraph with every city of importance in Iran.

Postal service, until 1874, was handled on contract by *chaparchi-bashis*, or masters of the post houses, who collected postage at both ends of the line. In 1875, an official of the Austrian Post Office, G. Riederer, was commissioned to organize a postal service on European lines, and in the following year was appointed Postmaster General. As a result of his work, Iran was admitted, in 1877, to the International Postal Union.<sup>5</sup>

#### E. LIVELIHOOD OF THE ARTISAN

Despite the modern influences that have invaded the cities of Iran, the town economy is little better than the pastoral and agricultural.

The towns and cities are the principal center of a handicraft industry, the products of which were formerly of great demand throughout the world. Besides carpets, Iranian artisans produced such wares as leather goods, embroidery work, exquisitely engraved brass and silver work, all highly prized by connoisseurs for their quality and the artistry of their design.

This state of national economy, in which the world came to the bazaars of Iran to purchase rather than to sell, and the trade balance was favorable, began to disappear at the beginning of the century. As the world turned more and more to mechanical processes by which hundreds of articles of stereotyped design could be turned out in the time that a craftsman could produce one individualized article, Iranian craftsmen faced a shrinking market for their wares even among their own people.

Beyond carpets, lambskins, opium, and certain medicinal products, there is little the Iranian merchant can offer the world that cannot be obtained elsewhere, at cheaper price,

<sup>5</sup> Curzon, *op. cit.* vol. 1, p. 466.

while at the same time he is proffered myriad products from overseas to tantalize his customers and to woo them of their substance. This condition has been aggravated rather than ameliorated by the efforts to achieve economic self-sufficiency through the modernization program that has been hectically pursued during recent decades.

Factory production is still an insignificant factor in Iranian economy, although the factories are supplying the major demand for cotton goods that were formerly imported and about half the sugar requirements of the country.

#### F. PETROLEUM

Of mineral production, while some coal and copper is mined, and various other minerals are found that may some day be significant, the principal item of present-day interest is petroleum. Iran is rich in oil resources and oil is a product of international interest and demand. Oil, however, is a dazzling chimera in Iranian economy. In current discussion, the word 'Iran,' when it is not linked with 'Russian imperialism,' is most frequently associated with the word 'oil'—and generally the three are linked together. The oil resources of Iran, both tapped and untapped, are immense, and though production is inconsiderable by comparison with United States production, it is greater than that of any other country except Russia and Venezuela.<sup>6</sup>

Deposits of bitumen, associated with petroleum, had been known in ancient times, when it was used for medicinal purposes and as a binder in brick construction. The flaming of natural gas seepages, ignited by lightning or other cause, was a miraculous manifestation that may have had much to do with the cult of fire worship, subsequently identified with Zoroastrianism. The modern story of oil begins in 1901, when W. K. D'Arcy, a British subject, obtained a concession for oil exploration and development covering the whole of the southern provinces of the country and a great part of central Iran. The vastness of this concession was not realized immediately.

<sup>6</sup> Production in 1939 was 78,151,000 barrels, compared with 1,264,962,000 barrels for the United States and 216,866,000 barrels for Russia. In 1945, Iranian production was 120,000,000 barrels.

For nearly seven years shafts sunk at great expense at various points proved to be only dry holes. The concession was on the point of being abandoned for lack of funds, but D'Arcy was one of those intrepid, unflagging spirits that make history. Pleading for time, begging for money, he finally persuaded his backers to finance one more well. This was bored at Masjid-i-Sulaiman, in desolate, inaccessible country some sixty miles north of Ahwaz, in southern Iran. On 26 May 1908, it came in a 'gusher' and opened up what has since proved to be one of the most prolific oil beds in all the world. The following year the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Ltd.,<sup>1</sup> was organized to prosecute the concession, but even then the project faced up-hill going, and in 1913 application had to be made to the shareholders for additional capital.

The British government had for some time been exercised about fuel supplies for the Navy, which was seeking to convert from coal to oil. Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, proposed that the government advance the funds required by the company, and a bill was presented to this effect. The bill was vigorously opposed, largely because of the taint of imperialism it carried, but was eventually passed, and the British government became the major shareholder, by one share, in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. During World War I, the Iranian fields became a principal supplier of fuel requirements to the eastern fleets, and to protect the fields from the Turks and Germans the Mesopotamian campaign was undertaken, which in 1917 succeeded in securing southern Iraq.

Royalties from the oil fields have ever since constituted a substantial share of the total revenue of the government of Iran, giving it a financial independence that it would not otherwise have possessed. By 1946, the annual royalty revenue to the government was at the rate of \$20,000,000 annually, while expenditures by the company in Iran for goods and services amounted to around \$50,000,000 annually.

So far as being a factor in solving the crucial economic problem of Iran, however, the oil workings and the revenues

<sup>1</sup> The name was subsequently changed to Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Ltd., when the government officially changed the name of the country from 'Persia' to 'Iran.'

therefrom have been insignificant. The reasons for this are: first, the production of oil requires comparatively little labor or material from Iran; that is, outside the oil-field areas it creates only a minor degree of employment for Iranian labor and skill; second, since all subsurface wealth is the property of the government, the royalty revenue flows into the public treasury rather than in diffusion throughout the economy. Essentially, what contributes to the welfare and happiness of the individual is the sense of producing something the world wants; that is, something he can take to the market and exchange for that which he desires. While it may sound very fine that his government possesses an Aladdin's lamp, which it need only rub to bless the country with all the goods that the shops of the world offer, it does not solve his individual problem, except perhaps by reducing his tax burden.

Actually, as we shall observe later, the effect of this flow of revenue to the State was not to reduce the burden of taxes, but to increase it.

## V

### MORALS AND RELIGION

#### A. THE MALADY OF IRAN

IRAN cannot be called a happy country. Despite the introduction of modern culture from the West, despite the increasing flow of revenue to the State from oil royalties, despite political reforms and the spread of the tradition and processes of democracy, despite the improvement of communications, the embellishment of the principal cities, and the surface appearance of a greater material well-being, life in Iran remains affected with pessimism and with futility of spirit.

'We should not praise ourselves by saying that once upon a time Cyrus the Great conquered the whole world. In what other country can you find today so many traitors, adulterators and embezzlers, all immune from punishment?' was the dejected comment of Deputy Ali Dashti in the Majlis debates leading to the engagement of foreign advisers in 1942.<sup>1</sup>

A veil of sadness lies over life in Iran. The prevailing colors are somber. The typical outdoor dress of Iranian women, until recently, was the black *chaddar*, which enveloped them from head to foot. Their Friday custom was to gather in the cemeteries to mourn. In the mosques, the places of religious worship, no hymns are sung, but only wail-like chants. Music is not a part of Moslem worship. Except in the largest cities, parks and places of public recreation are rare, though now more frequent than before.

Loneliness is a characteristic of the ordinary Iranian. The high wall which is still a typical feature of both urban and rural construction, and the veil for women, only recently thrown aside, are evidence and symbol of the exclusiveness of the social spirit. Clubs and social organizations, so common in the West, are practically unknown in Iran. Associations

<sup>1</sup> Millspaugh, A. C., *Americans in Persia*, Washington, 1946, p. 54.



deteriorate under the corroding effects of a general suspicion and distrust of others. One who moves among the people will be struck by how few close friends or intimates the ordinary Iranian enjoys, compared with the ordinary man of the West. Even those who possess the advantages of wealth, education abroad, and social rank are often the most prescribed in their associations, and unable to claim a circle of intimates extending further than the range of family ties. These, and many like them, come eagerly to the foreigner with their affection, their confidences, and with their yearnings. Among them will be found an acute loneliness and dejection, ill concealed by parties and conversation and card leaving.

What are the causes of this pessimism of life, what virus produces this *malaise* of the spirit?

This is a question the Iranians have asked as eagerly as anyone.

Iran is not a hermit kingdom; the national spirit is not one of exclusiveness and suspicion of other peoples. Unlike Japan, Afghanistan, and the principalities of Arabia, Iran has never been closed to intercourse with the world. While some xenophobia exists, foreigners generally have been welcomed to its bastioned uplands and freely admitted to its courts and revered cities. Foreign counselors since the times of the brothers Sherley, of Queen Elizabeth's day, and earlier, have been honored and consulted; particularly since the twentieth century, Iran has welcomed the wisdom of the West in solving its problems. More than that, shahs and the sons of nobles have gone abroad to inquire into the secrets of well-being in the West and the cure to the ills at home.

### *Materialistic Influences*

What is the wisdom these students and patriots have brought home? In Europe and America they learned, according to the fashion of nineteenth-century thought, that education was the universal panacea; that knowledge was the key to life; that knowledge brought enlightenment, and enlightenment brought universal peace, justice, and well-being. More recently, since the twentieth century, they have brought home a new creed from the West (and North): now, they learned, it was environment that conditioned happiness; material factors governed

the state of well-being; when the standard of living had been elevated, all men would be at peace, and social conflict would disappear.<sup>2</sup> The great objects of governmental policy, they were told, should be to increase the material resources of the nation, and to remove from its citizens the fear of economic insecurity.

How strange it must have seemed to these students from a land where a porter counts himself fortunate if he can have a little tea to go with his bread and cheese, and blessed indeed to have a little sugar to go with the tea, to discover that in a land so wealthy as America, where a carpenter rides to work in his own automobile, the preoccupation of statesmen and churchmen, of rich and poor, was that of the 'standard of living' and how it might be increased. No wonder they returned to their native land from a sojourn abroad with greater disquiet than before, convinced of the universal futility of existence, imbued with the dejected melancholy of their poet Omar who

. . . did eagerly frequent  
 Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument .  
 About it and about: but evermore  
 Came out by the same door where in I went.

## B. THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM

The Christian view of life is that the elemental cause of man's unhappiness is sin, that is, that the fundamental problem of life is moral rather than economic.<sup>3</sup> The Christian emphasis on the moral aspects of life is one shared, if to a lesser degree, by the ancient faith of Iran, that of Zoroastrianism, in which the cosmos is viewed as an eternal conflict between the forces of righteousness, under Ahura Mazda, and the forces of evil under Ahriman, the power of darkness, in which man is called upon to wage battle under the banner of Ahura Mazda.

<sup>2</sup> 'With me . . . the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected in the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.' (Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*. Preface to Second Edition.)

<sup>3</sup> 'Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' (Romans v: 12.)

A consideration of the prevailing condition of Iran, from the Christian point of view, must inevitably take into account the moral values by which life is appraised, the prevailing standards of behavior, and the concepts held about man's relation to the Universe.<sup>4</sup> These are all bound up in, and a product of, the religious faith to which the inhabitants adhere. This faith is Islam.

### *Moslem Doctrine*

Following the battle of Nehavend in A.D. 642, between the Persians and the Arabs, and the subsequent extinction of the Sassanian Empire, the religion of Zoroaster practically disappeared from Iran and was replaced by that of Islam, which the prophet Mohammed had proclaimed and under which the Arabs had been united and set upon a career of conquest and proselytization.

Among the Arabs, to whom the faith of Islam was first proclaimed, it brought many benefits. It supplanted a prevailing polytheism with a stern, uncompromising belief in one God; it abolished idol worship and priestcraft; it enjoined brotherly love among fellow believers, proscribed infanticide, and secured improvements in the status of women and slaves. It forbade wine drinking. As it spread from Arabia eastward to the borders of China and westward across North Africa and into Spain, it brought a political and religious unification of diverse peoples and a diffusion of the culture of the more civilized peoples within its embrace. Much of the culture that modern Europe inherited from the past was drawn from Islamic countries where it had been preserved from destruction at a time when conditions in Europe were adverse to its preservation.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Since Iran is a Moslem rather than a Christian country, it may, of course, be inappropriate to appraise the condition of the Iranian people from the Christian point of view. A Communist, appraising conditions from the point of view of dialectical materialism, might conclude that the basic problem was economic.

<sup>5</sup> Incidentally, much of this heritage of culture that passed into Europe under the name of Arabian or Saracenic was actually Persian, drawn into Islamic civilization following the conquest of Iran. The so-called *Arabian Nights Entertainment* (*The Thousand Nights and a Night*) was, for instance, a collection of Persian tales.

From a religious standpoint, a chief contribution of Islam was a purification of worship. All forms of deistic representation are strictly prohibited, images, ikons, or other symbols of deity being notably absent from any Moslem house of worship. There are, likewise, no altars in Islam and no complicated liturgy. The act of worship is refreshingly austere and simple: wherever the Believer may find himself at the stated hours of prayer, there he kneels—facing Mecca, the Prophet's birth-place—and makes his orisons to God the Compassionate, the Merciful. Priestly intermediation between God and man is not a part of Moslem doctrine; there exists no apostolic succession, no sacraments, and no one is ordained to pronounce even a benediction. The principal features of Moslem congregational worship are the reading of the Koran, sermons by clerics, and prayer rites in unison.

From the minarets of the mosques are chanted five times daily the *azan*, the Moslem call to prayer, and the minarets themselves are symbolic of the Islamic faith. 'As the minaret mounts into the sky, so must the soul seeking its God grope heavenward alone. Supported by buttresses, or joined to other structures, the minaret ceases to be a tower. And so it is with man. No priest can guide, no tongue but his alone can utter his soul's cry.'

And in this analogy of man's relation to God can be found an explanation of the democracy within Islam which so many travelers from Christendom have remarked. Within the following of the Prophet exists a brotherhood which, though it extends no further, is capable of bringing into union the Aryan Persian, the Semitic chieftain, and the savage from Africa, to kneel without let or hindrance side by side in the same mosque, or to marry their daughters with the others' sons. And in this same spirit one may often observe the *khan* and his servant sitting down together in the tea house to drink tea together or to smoke from the same *kalyan*.<sup>6</sup>

The holy book of the Moslem is the Koran, containing the

<sup>6</sup> This and the preceding quotation are from my 'The Mosque,' the *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1925. Paradoxically, while diverse races and colors unite in brotherhood within the mosque, no unbeliever is ordinarily permitted within its precincts, nor is it customary for women to enter.

words of God as revealed through his Apostle, Mohammed. It comprises stories of the prophets and apostles from Adam to Jesus; laws regulating family life, and personal, tribal, and national affairs; exhortations to good works and admonitions to evil doers; and vivid descriptions of the sensual delights of Paradise and the torments of Hell. In its more exalted passages it reaches heights of sublimity approaching those of some of the Hebraic psalms. The following is an example:

*The Fatiha* (opening chapter)

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!  
 The compassionate, the merciful  
 King on the day of reckoning!  
 Thee only do we worship, and to Thee do we cry for help.  
 Guide Thou us on the straight path,  
 The path of those to whom Thou hast been gracious; with  
 whom Thou art not angry, and who go not astray.

Sura 1<sup>†</sup>

*Moral Code*

The moral code of Islam is summarized in the five-fold obligation of the Moslem to (a) keep the fast (to abstain from food or drink from sunrise to sunset during the lunar month of Ramazan); (b) to make the pilgrimage to Mecca (at least once in a lifetime); (c) to pray (to make stated devotions five times daily); (d) to bear witness to the Faith by recital of the Creed ('There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet'); and (e) to give alms (nominally a fortieth of one's possessions).

Salutary as this code may be regarded, it falls short of the ethical standards set forth in the Mosaic Decalogue, or the summary of the Law as stated by Jesus.<sup>‡</sup> It is generally considered as falling below the moral precepts of Zoroastrianism.

The Moslem moral code is a rigid system of rules of conduct operating under the sanction of rewards and punishments,

<sup>†</sup> From J. M. Rodwell's translation of the Koran. This sura will be found inscribed over doorways and on the title page of books; it is recited daily at prayer.

<sup>‡</sup> 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . and . . . thy neighbor as thyself. . . On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' (Matthew xxii: 37-40.)

graded according to five categories: (a) obligatory acts (*vajeb*), (b) recommended acts (*mobah*), (c) permissible acts (*mostahab*), (d) disapproved acts (*makruh*), and (e) forbidden acts (*haram*). Obligatory and recommended acts are rewarded in Paradise if performed; omission of obligatory acts is punishable, while failure to perform recommended acts is not punishable. Permissible acts are neither rewarded nor punished, disapproved acts are not punished, while forbidden acts are punished and abstinence from forbidden acts is rewarded.

Sins are acts forbidden by God, regardless of the circumstances. There is no room for the operation of conscience. The ceremonial and the moral law are indistinguishable. It is as much a sin to pray without washing one's feet in the proper manner as to tell a lie. Adultery is no more sinful than eating a piece of bacon. Sins, however, are frequently divided into two main classes: great sins and little sins. The seven great sins are described as idolatry, murder, false charge of adultery, wasting the estate of orphans, taking interest on money, desertion from holy war, and disobedience of parents. Wine drinking and adultery are sometimes classified as great sins.<sup>9</sup>

### *Fatalistic Outlook*

Supplementing this summary of the Moslem obligation is a great body of customary law and tradition, found partly in the Koran and partly in the commentaries of Moslem theologians, and similar to the Mosaic law and tradition in its applicability to the whole realm of human affairs, the effect of which was to create, in principle, a theocratic state. As a force in history, the Koranic law suffered from the defect that it was without the elements of growth; the standards it set were those adapted to the needs and conditions of primitive Arab tribes of the seventh century. The result is that today in Islamic countries the Koranic law represents an enclave of medievalism in the surrounding modernism, and in most Islamic countries it has been abrogated officially or its application has been severely limited.

Thus, while Islam may have ameliorated the condition of

<sup>9</sup> Titus, Murray T., *The Young Moslem Looks at Life*, New York, 1937, p. 81.

women and slaves among its earlier adherents, there was no moral dynamic at work to continue this amelioration. The result has been that while in Christendom slavery has been abolished and woman, as a child of God, is gradually achieving equality with man, in Islam slavery is still tolerated by the Koranic law, and the condition of woman, even in the more advanced countries, is still one of degradation by Western standards.

The absence of moral dynamic, or moral growth, which characterizes Islam, is traceable to the basic conception the religion inductrinates concerning the relation between man and God. In Zoroastrianism, as has been remarked, man is accorded a highly important, if not crucial, position in the scheme of things. In the eternal warfare of the heavens, between good and evil, the powers of righteousness call upon man to lend his aid in defense of the right. In Christian theology, God, while infinite in attribute, renounces His infinitude for the sake of man in order that man may enter into communion with God.<sup>10</sup> In Islam no such bridge exists. God, being infinite in attribute, is unknowable by man, who is finite in attribute. The word *Islam* means, literally, submission (to the will of God). The predestination by God of good and evil, which is implicit in this conception, leads to the well-known Moslem doctrine of *Kismet*, or fate, expressed in the phrase, 'Every man's fate have we written on his forehead.'

The hopeless view of life, so far as spiritual growth and redemption is concerned, is aptly, if cynically, expressed in the couplet from the *Rubaiyat*, characterizing mankind as

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays  
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days.

'As a goat or a duck cannot change its nature, being so created by Allah, neither can a man rise above his condition, nor should I aspire to be more than a clerk,' said my Moslem secretary to me one day.

<sup>10</sup> 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' (Hebrews II: 14.)

*Mendacity*

A Moslem doctrine, which received considerable development among Shi'a Moslems—the branch of the faith to which most Iranians adhere—is that of *taqia*, or dissimulation for self-preservation. Specifically, the doctrine of *taqia* granted the Faithful the indulgence of dissimulating their faith if, while on a pilgrimage, they were challenged by unfriendly infidels.<sup>11</sup> By logical extension of the doctrine, almost any form of deceit may be justified. Thus the teaching arose: 'Verily a lie is allowable in three cases—to women, to reconcile friends, and in war.'

Approbation of deceit permeates Persian literature and innumerable stories are told in praise of cleverness by ruse. The opening story of the celebrated *Gulistan* of Sa'di—probably the most popular literary work in Iran—is one that extols the 'white lie.'<sup>12</sup>

The effect of this teaching has been a development of mendacity as an Iranian characteristic remarked by most travelers to that country. The Iranians themselves acknowledge their failings in this respect.

Some years ago, the Reverend J. Christy Wilson was in conversation with a prominent official of Azerbaijan. The conversation turned to the respective contributions of various peoples to the sum of human culture. The official remarked that the world was indebted to the French for art, to the British for government and administration, to Americans for industry and mechanical science.

'And to what are we indebted to Persia?' inquired Dr. Wilson.

The official considered a moment.

'I suppose,' he said, 'that were it not for Persia, the world would be at a loss for liars.'

<sup>11</sup> Mohammed may have found his authority for this in the Biblical account of Abraham's journeys, during which the Patriarch, to avoid molestation, passed off his wife Sara as his sister. (Genesis XII: 11-20; XX: 2-8.) Abraham, as the father of the Arabs (through the offspring of Hagar) is revered as one of the prophets.

<sup>12</sup> The story ends with the following couplet:

Words which beguile thee, but thy heart make glad,  
Outvalue truth which makes thy temper sad.



Deprecatory modesty may have been intended by this statement, but it remained a candid admission of a condition that is endemic in Iran.

The corrupting influence of Islam upon the Iranian national character may be illustrated by comparing the doctrine of *taqia*, as developed by Shi'a Moslems, with the corresponding teachings of Zoroaster, to which the people adhered prior to the Arab invasion in the seventh century.

Zoroaster identified all evil with the Lie—Druj it was called, or Ahriman, the Principle of Evil, against which all men should war. The importance of truth as a principle of behavior is illustrated by the following passages from the Avestic Gathas:

'In immortality shall the soul of the righteous be joyful, in perpetuity shall be the torments of the liars.'<sup>13</sup>

'The Liar stays the supporters of Right from prospering the cattle in district and province, infamous that he is, repellent by his actions.'<sup>14</sup>

'It is they, the liars, who destroy life.'<sup>15</sup>

'And there shall be for you the reward of this Covenant, if only most faithful zeal be with the wedded pair, that the spirit of the Liar, shrinking and cowering, may fall into perdition in the abyss.'<sup>16</sup>

Again and again these admonitions occur in the Gathas, the earliest Avestic hymns, which find their echo in the Biblical, 'He (Satan) is a lie and the father of it.'

How earnestly these teachings were taken to heart, how implicit they became in the standard of Persian virtue is well attested by Herodotus. Summarizing the fundamentals of Persian character, he wrote: 'Every boy is taught to ride, to draw the bow, and to tell the truth.'<sup>17</sup> And Darius, in his great Bisitun inscription, recounting his many conquests, reiterates '. . . I put down the Lie.'

How the Lie has corrupted the spirit of institutions in Iran today may be illustrated by the testimony of a certain Iranian woman who is now a professed Christian. She was, when I met her, about forty years of age, and a medical student at the

<sup>13</sup> Yasna XLV.

<sup>14</sup> Yasna XLVI.

<sup>15</sup> Yasna XXXII.

<sup>16</sup> Yasna LIII.

<sup>17</sup> *History*, Book I, ch. 136.

University of Teheran. I inquired about her conversion to Christianity. She explained:

While a student at the missionary school, I formed a great desire to be of help to my people. After leaving school, I did a number of things for which I was equipped by the education I had—such as teaching and office work—but there kept returning to me the call to a greater service. I had concluded that as disease seemed to be the greatest curse that afflicted our country I should become a physician. I enrolled in the University. I soon discovered, however, that I would never be able to complete my studies alone. I needed help. And so I went to the city of Hamadan, where I sought out Rev. Cady Allen, who had years before been my teacher, and told him my troubles. He suggested that I pray for help. I spent two weeks in the home of the Allens, and then the light dawned. It was not disease that was the curse of Iran, but sin, and for sin Islam offered no hope, but only further sin. Only Christ can redeem the world from sin. And so I accepted Christ as my Saviour.

I asked the woman why she had not been able to complete her studies without becoming a Christian. She answered:

Because I could not combat, without Jesus in my heart, the corruption and sin that everywhere assailed me. I was unwilling to bribe for marks, or to cheat for grades. That is the accepted method of obtaining a degree. Payments for marks are a chief source of income to the professors. It is in the order of things. We can have no true progress until we have honesty among our people and we can have no honesty among the people so long as deceit and corruption and bribery are taught them in the schools in which they are supposed to establish the principles of their lives. Here is the very fountainhead of corruption. The truth cannot be born of a lie, nor can a dishonest educational system produce honest men.

### *Degradation of Women*

The position of women as a social class has already been described. The extent to which the sex was degraded by the tenets of Islam may be indicated by passages from the Koran, the sacred book and law of the Faith: 'Ye may divorce your wives twice. . . But if the husband divorce her a third time, it is not lawful for him to take her again, until she shall have married another husband.' (Sura 11, *The Cow*.) 'And if ye be desirous to exchange one wife for another, and have given

one of them a talent, make no deduction from it.' (Sura iv, *Women*.)

Moslems explain that what Mohammed intended by these injunctions was to elevate the status of women above that prevailing in his day, and to free them from the confinement of Judaistic law that was customary among the Arabs. The fact remains, however, that the Islamic domestic standard is an anomaly that is tacitly recognized by most Moslems themselves.

### *Religious Spectacles*

A feature of Iranian life, tolerated by Shi'a Islam, and only recently abolished, has been the various religious spectacles, in which emotional excess reaches a depth of barbarity. The principal of these is the celebration of the Tenth of Moharram, which has both a religious and nationalistic character.

Moharram is the name of the first month in the Islamic lunar calendar, and the celebration takes place during the first ten days of the month, culminating on the tenth in a spectacle of sadistic frenzy. The occasion is one of mourning for Ali, Hussein, and Hassan, martyred claimants to the caliphate succession in the great political schism that divided the Islamic world into the *Sunni* and the *Shi'a*. Ali was the Prophet Mohammed's son-in-law, to whom, according to the Shi'a Moslems, the mantle of the Prophet should have passed. Instead, it went by election to Abu-Bekr, one of the Prophet's companions, and subsequently to Omar, and to Othman. On the death of Othman, Ali at last obtained the succession by election, but a schism developed; Ali was murdered by a dissident sectarian, and the succession passed by force to Muavia. The followers of Ali revolted and proclaimed as caliph Ali's son, Hassan, but Hassan soon renounced his claims under the threats of Muavia. After Muavia's death (A.D. 680) the Shi'a faction advanced Ali's second son, Hussein, as contender for the caliphate. A battle followed between the rival factions; Hussein and most of his followers were killed on the tenth of Moharram A.H. 61 (A.D. 680), and their heads were carried on lances through the streets of Kufa.

The cause of Ali disappeared, but did not perish, and Ali and his sons were revered as martyrs in Iran. The identifica-

tion of the cause of Ali with Iranian nationalism arose from the submerged resentment at the Arabian conquest of Iran—it was Omar, regarded by the Shi'as as an unlawful successor to the caliphate, who sent Arab forces into Iran and destroyed the Sassanian Empire at the battle of Nehavend, in A.D. 642—and from the fact that Hussein had married a daughter of the last Sassanian king, and so united in his succession the blood of the Prophet with that of the Iranian royal house.

Shi'ism, as the party of Ali and Hussein came to be known, continued to spread in Iran, and in 1502, with the rise of the Iranian Safavid dynasty, it was proclaimed the national religion and the celebration of the martyrdom became a national festival.

### *Celebration of Moharram*

A principal feature of the celebration, which occurred in every city and hamlet, was the procession of *flagellantes*—long lines of men of all ages, including mere boys, gowned in black with bared backs, bearing steel lashes and chains with which they beat their backs to the intonation of '*Shah Hussein, Wah Hassan*' ('King Hussein, also Hassan').

The spectacle reached a pitch of frenzy on the tenth day of Moharram. In the cities the whole population turned out; no work was done, and along the route of the processions the streets and the roofs would be lined with watchers. The women, in their black *chaddars*, kept to the roofs for safety where they gave the appearance of rows of tightly packed starlings on a ledge. On the Tenth of Moharram the lashes were abandoned for a more ghastly form of self-mutilation. On the Tenth, those who walked in the processions were gowned in white, heads were bared and shaven; each man, each boy, carried a sword, and at every intonation of the martyrs' names, would strike his head. Blood flowed down the face; the white robes were covered with blood; the intonation became a chant, a wail that was taken up by the crowd, increased in tempo until the syllables were blurred into a confused '*Shahsy, Wahsy*,' so that the processions have been called the *Shahsy-Wahsy* processions. So frenzied did the participants become that to protect them, relatives and friends would walk along beside them, carrying staves. When the blows became too intoxicated, they

would intercept them with the staff.<sup>18</sup> Many fainted from loss of blood and were carried away on litters. At the head of some of the processions walked those who were inured to torture: they were almost naked, and into their bare flesh they would thrust pins and flesh hooks to show their devotion to the martyrs.

On the Tenth of Moharram it was unsafe for any but a Moslem to appear in the streets: Armenians, Nestorians, Jews, and foreigners, as a rule, kept indoors.

It was the custom for the governor or chief official of the district to stand with his dignitaries in the principal *maidan*, or square, and review the processions.

As late as 1922, when I last witnessed them, the celebrations were carried on with official approval and with unabated frenzy. In 1928, however, the Government forbade the infliction of head wounds; subsequently officials were prohibited from reviewing the processions; and in 1935 the celebrations were prohibited entirely.

In 1935, also, the Id-i-Kourban, or Feast of the Sacrifice, in which a gaily caparisoned camel was publicly butchered as a sacrifice in the principal square, was abolished. This is a festival which, while celebrated both by Sunni and Shi'a Moslems, probably is a vestige of an ancient Magi and Arab religious custom.

### C. THE SYSTEM OF MUDAKHIL

A corrupting factor in the official, commercial, and domestic life of Iran which has been frequently commented on by observers is the system of *mudakhil*. The word may be freely translated, 'what comes to me.' It implies, according to its context, commission, perquisite, consideration, stealing, profit, and it may be said to signify that balance of personal advantage, usually expressed in money form, that can be extracted from any and every transaction. As Curzon said,

In no country that I have ever seen or heard of in the world is the system so open, so shameless, or so universal as in Persia. So far from

<sup>18</sup> I have seen frenzied celebrants turn aside to avoid this protection and strike with redoubled force. See my 'The Mosque, the *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1925.

being limited to the sphere of domestic economy or to commercial transactions, it permeates every walk and inspires most of the actions of life. By its operation, generosity or gratuitous service may be said to have been erased in Persia from the category of social virtues, and cupidity has been elevated into the guiding principle of human conduct.<sup>19</sup>

The consideration obtained for a favor or a service constituted the *mudakhil*; to the donor it was a *pishkesh*, or gift (literally, 'that which leads or comes before'). It was the custom for every recipient of public office to make a gift to the person from whom he received it. Each office holder in turn required *pishkesh* from those who held office under him. This requirement proceeded downward to the humblest clerk and the policeman on his beat, who, having no one beneath from whom to obtain his *mudakhil*, extracted it from any and every one.

A friend of mine told me of a young Iranian who is employed in one of the State ministries. Recently he heard that the young man had received a promotion. He hastened to congratulate him. 'No, no, commiserate me rather,' said the young man disconsolately. 'And why? Is it not a promotion? Also do not you enjoy a higher salary, gr̄eater responsibilities and honor?' 'Yes, yes,' sighed the young man, 'but not greater perquisites.' 'What do you mean?' 'Why,' explained the young man, 'now I am upstairs, in a large room, where I meet only those who are shown to me, whereas formerly I sat at a little desk in the antechamber, and could exact fees for the privilege of showing people to the man whose chair I now occupy.'

An offense against the laws could be absolved by an appropriate *pishkesh*, which was a sort of unofficial fine, which neither went into the public treasury nor carried the disgrace of a fine. To be fined was an official humiliation not only for the culprit but for his family and kinsmen. Iranian justice was often swayed by such regard for the feelings of the accused.

The story is told that Aga Mohammed Shah, eighteenth-century founder of the Kajar dynasty, hearing a peasant, whose ears he had ordered to be cut off, promising the executioner a few pieces of silver if only the tips were cut, notified the

<sup>19</sup> Op. cit. vol. I, p. 441.

peasant that if the *pishkesh* were doubled, in the shah's favor, he could save his ears entirely.<sup>20</sup>

In trade, a bargain was sealed by a *pishkesh*, a practice similar to that found in the West, in vestige, in the bonus. In addition to a stipulated, or customary, *pishkesh*, however, the transaction might be loaded with not so apparent *mudakhil*. An agent would extract a commission, or *mudakhil*, on every purchase made for his principal. A cook required his *mudakhil* on the food he bought for the table. A servant, on being engaged, would inquire how much rice was used in the house, in order to measure his *mudakhil*. The system reached its height in the annual New Year's presents to the shah. Every governor, minister, chief of a tribe, or official of any rank, then made his offering, the minimum amount of which was determined by custom, and the maximum left to the means or ambition of the donor. During the reign of the Kajars, in the nineteenth century, these presents often accounted for as much as a fifth to a third of the fixed revenue.

Curzon's comments on the system of *mudakhil* were written over fifty years ago. Most present-day observers make less mention of it, particularly in regard to governmental administration. In part, this has been due to the establishment of constitutional government in 1906, which, while weak, served to regularize the administration, provide more steady sources of revenue, and relieve somewhat the dependence of functionaries upon perquisites and illicit income. A more important factor has been a generally rising standard of official and personal conduct, of which more will be said later.

#### D. THE OPIUM PROBLEM

A survey of the moral condition of the Iranian people would not be complete without reference to the problem of opium.

In spring, upon the high Iranian plateau, particularly in the region of Isfahan, the traveler will come upon fields of tall, crimson flowers. These flowers produce a crop that is at once one of the principal sources of livelihood to peasant and merchant, and of revenue to the government, and the most serious

<sup>20</sup> Sykes, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 295.

menace to the health, morals, and even the economic well-being of the country. These flowers are the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*). Its juice is opium, a powerful narcotic, a mixture of about twenty alkaloids, the most important of which is morphine.

Opium serves as a valuable component of medicines and as such is a boon to mankind; a good deal more opium is consumed directly, as a sedative, in which use it is a curse, since it weakens the body, destroys or perverts the senses, and corrupts the morals of the user. The greatest consumers of opium for this purpose have been among the peoples of Asia, principally the Chinese, to whom it was introduced by European traders, particularly the British, exporting the drug from India and Iran. Of recent years, the use of opium, in the more pernicious forms of its derivatives, morphine and heroin, has spread in Europe and the Western Hemisphere.

The history of opium cultivation in Iran is relatively recent. The story begins with the Anglo-Chinese opium war of 1840-42 when the Chinese emperor attempted to prohibit the importation of Indian opium into China by British and other foreign traders. As the result of that war, Hong Kong became a British possession, through which an enormous trade in opium developed. At that time, in Iran, the opium poppy was grown only to a limited extent, in the region of Yezd, and it was not until 1853 that opium as an item of export first appeared in the Iranian customs statistics. Cultivation of the opium poppy was stimulated in part by this demand, in part as a result of a blight, the pébrine, which in 1864 attacked the silkworm and all but destroyed the Persian silk culture. Until that time, Iran had been a principal source of silk in the European market. Attempts to introduce Japanese cocoons, and later Italian cocoons, did not fare well, and the Iranian peasants began to turn to poppy cultivation as a substitute crop.

The soil and climate of Iran are highly favorable to the growing of the opium poppy, and economic factors tend to foster its cultivation. The poppy is planted in the autumn for spring harvest, and thus it can be grown when the moisture content of the arid Iranian plateau is most abundant; it is harvested in time for summer crops such as melons and to-



bacco. Because of the concentrated nature of the product, and the high unit value (around \$10 a pound in legitimate trade and many times that price in illicit trade), the grower is not troubled by the problem of transportation to market, so vital in a land of vast distances and poor roads as Iran.

The poppy is grown today in eighteen of the twenty-six provinces of Iran; its cultivation is an occupation engaging an estimated 20 per cent of the population. The value of the crop, until recent years, was exceeded only by that of wheat and barley; the revenue from the opium tax provided as much as 10 per cent of the government revenue.

Iran has become a principal source of opium in contraband trade. Formerly, it was in substantial demand by pharmaceutical houses, for medicinal use, because of its superior quality and high morphine content, which runs from 12 to 12½ per cent, compared with up to 10 per cent for the Chinese opium and 7 to 7½ per cent for the Indian; but the unwillingness of the Iranian government to place any effective control on its production and export led the legitimate trade, particularly that of the United States, to turn to Turkey, where such controls have been established, and the greater part of American imports now come from Turkey. It is estimated that Iran produces some 30 per cent of the world supply of opium, but because of the immense amount of contraband trade, any estimates are liable to be wide of the mark, as are figures for production and consumption.

The cultivation of the poppy is a natural inducement to the use of opium. After the flower has blown but before the seed has matured, peasants and townsfolk flock into the fields for the harvest. This is done by incising the seed pod. The juice exudes at these incisions, and collects in a reddish-brown, sticky, gum-like substance. The following morning the harvesters again go into the fields and gather this sap into copper bowls by means of spoon-shaped scrapers. These copper bowls are required to be delivered to the government warehouse in the village, where the peasant is paid for his produce; but much of this gum never reaches the warehouse. Wandering among the villagers will be mendicants with their wooden begging bowls who, in place of alms, may be granted the boon of dipping a spoon into the sap. Babies, when they cry, may

be allowed to suck the sticky fingers of their mothers. Much of the crop is concealed for later sale through smugglers who offer a higher price than the government rate.

The international efforts that have been made to control the production and distribution of opium, and the attitude of the Iranian government toward these efforts, will be discussed in a later chapter. The gravity of the opium problem for the Iranians may be indicated by estimates, however tentative, that the number of opium smokers and opium eaters in Iran ran from 25 to 50 per cent of the population before World War II, and today runs as high as 75 per cent. The deleterious effect of such widespread addiction upon the health of the people can hardly be exaggerated.

#### E. CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

A constructive force among the Iranian people, combating the deteriorating influences above described, sowing the seeds of regeneration, is that of the Christian religion, the importance of which can hardly be ignored in any appraisal of the present situation. Christianity, once influential—though never predominant—throughout Iran, but long submerged and almost impotent during the ascendancy of Islam, has experienced a renaissance, particularly during the past hundred years, since the advent of the modern missionary movement. A discussion of the impact of Christian missions upon the Iranian people must be reserved for a later chapter, but here a brief survey of Christian evangelism may be offered.

The earliest evangels to Iran were the Nestorians, the ancient Assyrians who in the first century accepted the Christ preached to them by the Apostles Thaddeus and Thomas and whose Church is known as the Church of the East. In succeeding centuries they sent their missionaries throughout Iran, Bactria, Tartary, India, and China; during the fourth and fifth centuries they maintained as many as thirty-two metropolitan sees, each see comprising from seven to fifteen bishoprics, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Pacific; the Church of the East at that time was greater in its number of adherents and its influence than the Western organizations of Christendom. To this day, in China, almost submerged by the

surrounding Confucianism and Buddhism, are colonies of Christians who maintain, if feebly, the rites and traditions of the Church of the East.

During the Sassanian Empire (226-642), Christian influence was considerable throughout Iran, and some of the kings are said to have been adherents to the faith—among them Shapur I (241-72), and Chosroes II Parviz (591-628), who married a Christian, the Shirin of Persian legend—while translations of the Gospel into Persian exist from a date as early as 1282. This did not prevent serious persecutions of the faithful, however, since Christianity came to be identified with Roman influence. The rise of Islam and its spread throughout Iran after 642 was a further antagonistic influence.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century the scourge of Timur the Lame, the Tartar, fell upon the Church of the East, and its scattered and decimated adherents retired in poverty and distress to the mountain fortresses north of Mesopotamia.

From the seventh century on, as a result of the Islamic conquests, Iran had become almost wholly Moslem, and by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Christians, both of the Nestorian and the Armenian faith, numbered only a few hundred thousand.

### *Modern Missionary Effort*

Missionary activity on the part of Western Christendom was begun in the early years of the seventeenth century, with the arrival in Isfahan of Augustinian friars, sent from Hormuz (under Portuguese control), and Carmelite friars sent, by way of Russia, by Pope Clement VIII. These missionaries came originally in the dual capacity of political emissaries and Christian evangelists. The Carmelite mission was of the greater importance and established an evangelistic work that continued, with varying fortunes, until 1780, when it finally disappeared during the chaotic conditions in Iran following the death of Nadir Shah in 1747. Roman Catholic missionary work in Iran was not revived until 1850 when Lazarists began work in Tabriz.

The records of the Carmelite fathers in Iran have been generally neglected by historians of Iran, and the part they played

in opening up diplomatic and cultural relations between Iran and the West has generally gone unrecognized.<sup>21</sup> Their dispatch to Iran was the result of letters received by Pope Clement VIII, brought from the Persian Shah Abbas by the English adventurer, Sir Anthony Sherley. Papal policy for many years had been directed towards a coalition of Christian powers to wage war against the Turks, whose empire was still expanding at the expense of Christendom. Shah 'Abbas had come to the throne in Persia and was waging successful warfare against the Turks from the East. He proposed, in the letters sent by Sherley, joint operations against the Turks, and offered in return hospitality and protection to Christians in his realm and freedom for evangelistic work.

The opportunity to organize a political and military coalition against the Turks, as well as to establish Catholic missionary work in Persia, appealed to the Pope, and to further these objects he requested the services of the Carmelites. The selection of Carmelites for such a mission was somewhat paradoxical. The Carmelites were pledged to poverty, obedience, and chastity. Until this time, moreover, they had confined themselves largely to contemplation and asceticism, and missionary evangelism was not regarded as within their sphere. They agreed, nevertheless, to undertake the mission, and three fathers of the Order,<sup>22</sup> accompanied by two lay brothers, one of whom was a military tactician, set forth in 1604, by way of Russia.

<sup>21</sup> In 1927 there appeared a volume, *A Chronicle of Events between the years 1623 and 1733 relating to the Settlement of the Order of Carmelites in Mesopotamia* (Oxford University Press, Sir Hermann Gollancz, ed., London, 1927), a transcription, accompanied by an English translation, of a manuscript from the archives of the Carmelite mission at Basra. Beyond a reference to the fact that the manuscript was acquired by purchase, no indication of its origin was given, but it appears to have been one of a number of manuscripts sold by Arab caretakers during a hiatus in the mission a quarter century earlier. The appearance of this work inspired an anonymous historian to make an exhaustive research of the archives of the Order at Basra and at Rome, as well as the secret Vatican archives, and in 1939 there was published in England, in two volumes, a work entitled *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, giving a comprehensive survey, from original sources, of the establishment of the mission in 1604 until its final disappearance in 1780.

<sup>22</sup> Fr. Paul Simon, Fr. John Thaddeus, and Fr. Vincent. Fr. Paul Simon returned in 1608 with letters from the Shah to the Pope, and a little later

The monks were detained in Russia, then in political confusion because of the usurpation of the tsardom by Boris Godounov, and did not reach the court of the shah until 1607. The two lay brothers died en route. Throughout the reign of Shah Abbas the Carmelite fathers continued to act as quasi-ambassadors of the Pope, and meantime to press for the privilege of opening a church and of baptizing converts. They translated the Gospels into Persian. The failure of diplomacy to effect a coalition between the power of Persia and that of Christendom against the Turk caused Shah Abbas' interest in the Carmelites to cool, and in the latter years of his reign they were subjected to considerable persecution, and but for the high regard in which they were personally held by the Shah—their asceticism and truthfulness seem to have made a great impression on the monarch—they might have been expelled. Following the death of Shah Abbas and the development of other diplomatic relations between Persia and the West, their role of diplomatists disappeared and they confined themselves to evangelism, more particularly among the Armenians. During the 150 years of their major activity, some 150 Carmelite fathers were sent to Iran, and their average tenure was fourteen and a half years.

The history of Protestant missions in Iran dates from 1811 when Henry Martyn, an English evangelist, translated the New Testament into Persian. Henry Martyn left, however, more than a translation of the Book; his life was a translation of his Master's life in terms that the most unlettered could understand. Though he died after only a year on the mission field, such was the impression made by his character upon the people that he is still remembered. Since Martyn's time, a principal factor in Protestant missionary effort has been the

Fr. Vincent, discouraged by the obstacles to their mission, went off to Hormuz to establish a convent there. Fr. John Thaddeus, however, remained, and, persevering in his missionary efforts, managed between his diplomatic assignments to establish a church and win a number of converts. On his return to Rome, in 1629, he was proposed as bishop to Isfahan, but demurred on the ground that he was but a monk and not qualified for ecclesiastical office. He was appointed, nevertheless, and in 1632 started on his return to Persia to take up his duties. On the journey he died of injuries sustained from a fall from his mule.

zeal in translating the Scriptures into Persian and the various subsidiary languages spoken by the tribes.

In 1829, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions established work in Urmiah (now Rizayeh) by sending out Messrs. Dwight and Smith, who were followed shortly by the Reverend Justin Perkins. This work was subsequently taken over by the Presbyterians, and in 1871 their activities were extended to Teheran, in 1873 to Tabriz, to Hamadan in 1881, to Resht in 1883, and in 1911, it became possible to establish work in such a center of Moslem fanaticism as the shrine city of Meshed. During the 1930's, before the government began to restrict missionary activity, there were more than a hundred Presbyterian missionaries in Iran, and their work included the operation of six hospitals, two colleges, and numerous secondary and primary schools.

Missionary work by the Church Missionary Society of the English Church was begun in 1869 in Isfahan, and in 1935 engaged some sixty missionaries.

In addition, several other Protestant denominations have carried on evangelism in Iran: the Lutherans formerly carried on a modest work among the Kurds, and the Seventh Day Adventists now maintain a mission in Teheran.

### *Official Attitude Towards Missions*

Missionary activity in Iran has historically been much freer from restraint than it has in Turkey or Iraq. During the nineteenth century, because of opposition from the Islamic clergy, direct proselytization was confined largely to the Nestorians and Armenians, whose faith had survived the surrounding influences of Islam. The first Protestant churches were composed of adherents from these ancient Christian communities. The question naturally arises, and has often been debated, about the propriety of one Christian sect proselytizing among another, but the answer is only to be found in the degree of strengthening of the Christian testimony and the purification of morals and conduct that have occurred in the Christian community, where there are those adherent both to the ancient rites and to the newer.

For a long time, to preach among Shi'a Moslems was to incur risk of life for the preacher, and exile or death to those

who listened. Nevertheless, there were always some who were eager to hear the Gospel message, and from the earliest days there have been instances of conversions from among Moslems. Missionary effort among them was, until the last fifty years, largely indirect, through schools and hospitals, where those who came were brought in touch with Christian influences and teaching and where Christian literature was available. By means of the depots and the traveling colporteurs of the British and Foreign Bible Society, also, whose work was established in 1812, the Bible, the Gospels, and Christian tracts have been distributed among the people in increasing numbers. In 1945, over a hundred thousand pieces of literature were sold.

The official attitude of the government has been one of tolerance towards missionary work, and in this connection it may be remarked that while American missionaries have been in Iran since 1829, it was not until 1883 that any diplomatic relations existed between the government of Iran and the United States. Missionaries have been hospitably received by all classes, and many of them have been confidants of the highest officials. Dr. W. S. Vanneman, for example, was frequently consulted by the *Vali Ahd*, or governor of Azerbaijan, a post always held by the heir apparent to the throne, and was admitted for professional calls into the royal *andirun*, or women's quarters, a trust accorded no Persian physician.

### *Recent Restrictions on Missionary Activity*

While the government and the upper classes in general treated the missionaries with consideration, in the provinces, where the influence of the Moslem clergy was more powerful, the missionaries were often subject to annoyances and vexations, including occasional arrest.

An apparent setback to missionary work occurred during the era of reform and nationalistic fervor that followed the accession of Riza Shah Pahlavi in 1926. In 1928, perhaps as a means of weakening the influence of the Moslem clergy, perhaps in imitation of western secularization, the teaching of religion in schools was forbidden. In 1933, possibly in order to bring the Armenians and Nestorians of northwest Iran under greater control, the Urmiah district was declared a military zone and the missionaries were directed to leave.

Thus ended a missionary work that had existed for over a hundred years. Beginning in 1935, all foreign schools were closed by the process of forbidding their attendance by Iranians, and in 1938 the properties of the two Presbyterian colleges at Teheran were expropriated by the government.

This restriction on missionary work was no doubt a blessing in disguise. In the Urmiah district, where American missionary influence was extensive, the Armenians and Nestorians had come to look to the missionaries, rather than to their government, as their protector. There may have been justification for this.<sup>28</sup> In any case, an indigenous Christian Church now existed, and the Mission Board recognized that the time had come to allow this Church to find its own footing. The closing of the schools permitted the missionaries to focus their efforts on their main task, that of preaching the Gospel rather than disseminating the knowledge and material sciences of the West. Restrictions continued to be placed on preaching, however, but after the abdication of Riza Shah Pahlavi in 1941, missionary activity regained some of the freedom it was guaranteed under the Iranian Constitution.

<sup>28</sup> During World War I, when the district was in a state of anarchy, an American missionary, Reverend William A. Shedd, assumed a political status and practically ruled the Nestorian nation, of which some eighty thousand inhabitants had taken sanctuary in the mission compound from Turks and Kurds. Subsequently he led them out, under conditions of great confusion, to central Iran. Half the company perished from slaughter and disease on the way. Among those who fell victim to typhus was the intrepid Dr. Shedd.





**PART THREE**  
**THE REIGN OF RIZA SHAH PAHLAVI**



## I

### THE ACCESSION OF RIZA SHAH PAHLAVI

FROM time to time in these pages reference has been made to Riza Shah Pahlavi and his reign. Riza Shah Pahlavi came into power in 1922 as Riza Khan, colonel in the Iranian army; he was crowned shah in 1926, and abdicated in 1941. He was, after Mustafa Kemal of Turkey, the first of the crop of dictators that were seeded by World War I—and he was the first of them to fall.

In the *coup d'état* of 21 February 1921, Riza Khan had taken the post of minister of war and commander of the army, leaving the prime ministry to Seyyid Zia-ed-Din. He obtained, however, the transfer of certain substantial sources of revenue from the ministry of finance to the ministry of war, for the purpose of re-equipping the army, and thereby secured his independence of the cabinet. It soon became apparent who was the power in the government: before a hundred days had elapsed, Seyyid Zia-ed-Din was hurrying out of the country into exile. During his early years in power, however, Riza Khan acted by strictly constitutional procedure, and there is every reason to believe that he was animated by patriotism and democratic ideals.

#### A. RESTORATION OF GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY

Riza Khan's first task was to restore the authority of the central government. The fact that this authority had practically ceased does not mean that complete anarchy prevailed. In a country so vast, and so poorly provided with communications, considerable authority had of necessity always been vested in the provincial governors, and the provincial governments had continued to function with varying effectiveness throughout the British and Russian occupation. The tribes, however, had grown increasingly restive and were now defiant,

making the principal roads unsafe. Khuzistan under Sheik Khazal, Kurdistan under Ismail Agha (Simitko) and the Maku Sardars (the Ijlal-ul-Mulk family), Gilan under Kuchik Khan, the Karadagh under Amir Ashad, as well as several smaller areas, were all in revolt. All had to be subdued by military expeditions.

Riza Khan first proceeded to unify and re-equip the army. At that time the military forces of the realm consisted of the Cossack Brigade, an organization that had been created originally by Nasr-ed-Din Shah in 1882 but that had always been under Russian officers and Russian influence; the gendarmerie that W. Morgan Shuster had established, and that had been under Swedish officers; the South Persia Rifles that the British had organized, and that had never been recognized by the government; a small household troop about the shah, and the several tribal levies, officered by their own chiefs, of uncertain composition and strength.

The Cossack Brigade numbered some 14,000; the gendarmerie, around 12,000; the household troops about 2,000; while the South Persia Rifles totaled approximately 6,000.

Riza Khan had acquired command of the Cossack Brigade following the Russian Revolution and the withdrawal of the Russian officers; this became the core of his national army. The South Persia Rifles was disbanded without incident and its members incorporated into the army. An attempt to absorb the gendarmerie met with resistance, particularly in Tabriz.<sup>1</sup> It was necessary to besiege the city. The battle lasted nearly a week; a great deal of ammunition was expended, but few lives, and the principal losses were sustained by the Presbyterian mission compounds and the bazaars. The walls and upper stories of the mission school compound, where I was living at the time as a teacher, were riddled with gunfire, and the bazaars were looted from end to end by the victorious party.

By 1924, the military forces of the country had been consolidated into five principal armies and one independent brigade. In addition a separate force of highway patrol was

<sup>1</sup> The chief of the gendarmerie was Abol Qasim Lahuti, later known as a poet of revolutionary themes (see above, Part II, ch. I, *Modern Literature*). He later became a member of the Soviet Komintern and continued to carry on anti-shah propaganda from the safety of Moscow,

created to maintain security on the roads. In 1925, the national arms were further strengthened by the passage of a military conscription law, requiring two years' military service for all males reaching the age of twenty-one. The application of conscription was extended in 1926, and again in 1931, by limiting the exemptions from service.

By the end of the decade, the army had been built up to a force of between 70,000 and 80,000 troops, besides the highway-patrol force of around 12,000. Besides this, an embryonic navy of half a dozen gunboats was established on the Persian Gulf (Russia continued to forbid any Iranian forces on the Caspian); a small air force and several arsenals and munitions factories were also created.

Two officers' training schools were established at Teheran, and military students were sent to France and Germany for further military instruction. Another measure designed to enforce the authority of the new shah and the central government was the establishment of a secret police, modeled after the Italian and German, with informers and *agents provocateurs*, and secret executions. This, however, came later in Riza Khan's career.

Among the expenditures on the military establishment was an enormous sum for an officers' club in Teheran, the grand staircase, reception hall and furnishings of which would command admiration in any capital.

For a country of the resources of Iran, the cost of building up the military forces was tremendous, and constituted a serious drain on the economy; but while it served to maintain internal order, it did not deter the Russians and British from an eventual second occupation, in August 1941, during which the fleet was blown out of the water by the British, the Russians took over the munitions factories to supply their own needs, and Russians, British, and Americans all found the air-fields a great convenience in their operations.

The immediate task of the new army was the reduction of the recalcitrant tribes. In Gilan, the Russians had set up a Soviet republic headed by Kuchik Khan, chief of the *Jangalis*, or Jungle Dwellers. Kuchik Khan had been a strong nationalist; at one time he had founded a brotherhood known as the *Ehtahad-ul-Islam*, or Union of Islam, which was sworn to driv-

ing out the foreigners, the members of which took a Nazarite vow not to bring scissor or razor to their heads until their oath had been accomplished.<sup>2</sup> Mostly, however, Kuchik Khan had supported himself and his followers by banditry; when the Russians occupied Resht in 1920, they found in him an apt tool for their purposes.

Following the signing of the Russo-Iranian Agreement on 26 February 1921, the Russians withdrew their support from Kuchik Khan. He was captured within the year and his head was cut off and placed on a spear above the gates of Kasvin.

The fertile Urmiah plain of Azerbaijan, the richest agricultural region of Iran, was in control of the Kurds, whose principal chief, the redoubtable Ismail Agha, familiarly known as Simitko, was seeking to establish an independent Kurdish state. Simitko had been at one time an officer in the Turkish army; he spoke excellent French. During the war he had raided the Nestorians, and in the latter part of 1921, while a government force was seeking to reach him by a circuit around the northern end of Lake Urmiah, Simitko led a force of Kurds to the southern end of the lake and fell upon the city of Souj-Boulagh, garrisoned by a force of some seven hundred government troops. The whole garrison was captured and promptly massacred by being lined against a wall and mowed down with machine-gun fire.

In the pillage of the town that followed this success, the Kurds broke into the American Lutheran mission, murdered the principal missionary, Mr. Bachimont, and captured the three women missionaries. Fortunately, Simitko recognized one of the women as a missionary nurse whom he had once invited to teach his people; he set her to work looking after his wounded men, and a week later released the three to find their way to Tabriz, a hundred miles distant, as best they could.<sup>3</sup>

For some time it was feared that Simitko would follow up his success by an attack on Tabriz, but instead he shrewdly withdrew to the mountains. The Urmiah plain was eventually reoccupied in 1923, but the Kurds were not made tractable

<sup>2</sup> Sykes, op. cit. vol. II, pp. 489 ff.

<sup>3</sup> For an account of this massacre, see my *Blood of the Martyrs*, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1922.

until some years later. Simitko took refuge in Iraq, and while the Iraq government refused to surrender him, on the grounds that his acts were political rather than criminal, he was subsequently induced to parley, and was seized and assassinated.

In the south, Sheik Khazal, who ruled the Muhaisin Arabs of Khuzistan, had enjoyed political independence for years under a subsidy of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company to keep peace. In 1924, he attempted to defy Riza Khan, but Riza Khan moved with an army against him. The Sheik surrendered and was brought to Teheran where, however, he was allowed to live in retirement. He died a few years later.

The Lurs and Kashgais were also gradually suppressed and disarmed, partly by force, partly by statecraft. Following an ancient policy of the shahs, Riza Khan induced or compelled numbers of the tribesmen to settle in villages, or to accept grazing privileges in other parts of the country, while their chiefs were courteously but firmly invited to take up their residence in the capital. When the Lurs had objected, by force of arms, to a highway that was projected through their mountains, Riza Khan resolved the question by building villages along the route of the highway and inducing the tribesmen to occupy them: this policy was, however, only moderately successful.

By 1925, the country was fairly quiet, though in 1929 the Kashgais again revolted, and once more in 1937, and still again in 1943. The 1929 troubles arose over resentment at the predatory practices of the military governor of the district, at attempts to apply conscription, at the imposition of European dress, and at the enforced residence of their chiefs in Teheran.

## B. THE ACCESSION TO THE THRONE

Riza Khan assumed the premiership in 1923 in the general expectation that a republic would be established. Throughout Iran there was revulsion against the monarchy: the people were ready, psychologically if not politically, for the establishment of a republic. World War I had ended as a great triumph of political democracy, as formulated in Wilson's Fourteen Points, and the republican form of government



was generally regarded as its ideal expression. The great monarchies of Europe had fallen—the Romanoff, the Hohenzollern, the Hapsburg—and in Turkey, in 1922, the Sultanate was abolished. The Shah of Iran, sensing the handwriting on the wall, and having no mind for government, was spending his time on the Riviera. It was generally understood, therefore, when Riza Khan became prime minister, that the anticipated republic would be proclaimed on the following New Year's Day (21 March, according to the Persian calendar).

At this juncture, however, support for the monarchy came from an unexpected source. The Moslem clergy, who had traditionally regarded the throne with suspicion, if not with contempt, and who had been instrumental in obtaining the Constitution, suddenly took fright at democratic institutions, and announced their opposition to a republic. What produced this change of heart was the action of the Turkish government, on 3 March 1924, abolishing the Caliphate, the spiritual headship of Islam, as it had two years before abolished the Sultanate.<sup>4</sup> The effect of this was profound throughout the Mohammedan world, and although the Moslems of Iran belonged to the Shi'a sect and had never recognized the caliphate, the clergy became alarmed lest under a republic their ecclesiastical prerogatives be shorn, as they were being shorn in near-by Turkey.<sup>5</sup>

Three days before the meeting of the Majlis that was to make the change, demonstrations took place, and in order to quiet the agitation, Riza Khan publicly visited the holy shrine at Qum where he consulted the assembly of *mujtahids*. On 1 April 1924, he proclaimed that the republican form of government was contrary to the Islamic faith, and forbade further discussion of the matter. The following year, in February 1925, he requested and obtained dictatorial powers; on 31 October 1925, the Majlis formally deposed Sultan Ahmad Shah; and on 12 December Riza Khan was appointed shah by vote of the Majlis. On 25 April 1926, in accordance with the ancient

<sup>4</sup> The Ottoman sultans had assumed the title of Caliph, or Successor of the Prophet, in 1517, following the conquest of Egypt and the extinction of the Egyptian caliphate succession.

<sup>5</sup> It appears, also, that there was considerable conniving between Riza Khan and the leading clerics to bring about this eventuality.

custom, he placed the crown of the *Shah-in-Shah* on his head and founded a new dynasty. From then on his power grew more absolute, the character of his administration gradually changed, and the dictum of Lord Acton was justified that 'power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'

## II

### THE REGIME OF RIZA SHAH PAHLAVI

RIZA SHAH PAHLAVI's policy from the beginning was to restore the national spirit, consolidate the national unity, and strengthen the State to defend its sovereignty. Everywhere in the world, of course, nationalism was resurgent and seeking inspiration. In Turkey, Mustafa Kemal had boldly severed his nation from the past, seeking his new model in the democracies of the West. Riza Khan, however, returned to the ancient glories of his country, to the great empires of the Sassanians and Achaemenians for his example. Whether following this as a precedent or not, Mussolini, in Italy, revived the memory of the Caesars, and, in Germany, Hitler refurbished Valhalla and restored the Teutonic pantheon.

#### A. NATIONAL ATAVISM

It was natural that Riza Khan should turn to the past. He was from Mazanderan, the last Sassanian province to succumb to the Arab invasion, and a district in which the Persian tradition persisted at its purest. Moreover, throughout Iran, the recollection of the earlier glories had never been lost as they had been in Italy and Germany. This was largely due to Firdausi, whose epic poem the *Shah Namah*, or 'Chronicles of the Kings,' though written nearly a thousand years earlier, was still an integral part of the literature of the country, was still read and recited in the language in which it was written, as was not the case with the *Aeneid*, the *Gallic Wars*, or the *Nibelungenlied*.

To signify the renaissance of the earlier tradition and the purely Persian character of the new regime, Riza Khan not only assumed on his coronation the name Pahlavi, which is the name of the archaic Persian tongue in common use before its corruption by Arabic influences, but also instituted a move-

ment to purge the Persian language of its Arabic incrustation. While the structure of the language was still substantially that of Firdausi, and the *Shah Namah* could still be understood, some half the words of common usage, it has been estimated, were of Arabic origin. A commission of scholars, the *Farhang*, was appointed to prepare a new dictionary, in which Persian words were substituted for their Arabic equivalents, and the Persian words were required to be used in all official communications.

For public constructions, architectural designs drawn from Persepolis, Susa, and other Achaemenian and Sassanian architectures with modernistic adaptations were employed, together with purely modern styles imported from Germany, rather than the styles that had predominated since Islamic times.

Archaeological excavations were encouraged, and a magnificent museum of archaeology was erected in Teheran.

Reference has been made to the Guebers, or Parsees, adherents to the ancient Zoroastrian faith, and of the consideration accorded them in recent years. Since Islamic times they had been outcasts in society, under greater disabilities than Christians or Jews, who were, despite their denial of the True Faith, regarded as 'People of the Book,' and entitled to a certain toleration. Because of persecutions, and because they did not admit proselytes, the Parsees in Iran had diminished to only a few thousand, resident chiefly around Yezd, in southern Iran. As custodian of the ancient lineage and tradition, they were now visited with favor, and many of them became influential in the government.

To signify to the world the changes that had occurred it was decreed that the country should henceforth be known by its traditional name of Iran, or Land of the Aryans, rather than Persia. This produced considerable confusion abroad, particularly in commercial circles, and especially in the rug trade, in which the name 'Persian' had become synonymous with the highest excellence in floor coverings.

## B. CONFLICT WITH THE CLERGY

In centralizing all authority in the State, as well as in re-establishing pre-Islamic traditions, it was inevitable that Riza

Shah Pahlavi should come in conflict with the clergy. The actual opposition arose, however, over the efforts at modernization and the adoption of the current modes of the West. While the Shah returned to the past for inspiration, he faced forward and outward for his means. Coincident with a reverence for the great days of the Achaemenians and Sassanians was an equal reverence for the material achievements of modern civilization.

The first issue between the Shah and the clergy arose over the program to reform the legal administration of the country, a work that had first been undertaken following the establishment of the Constitution, but which had practically lapsed.

Prior to 1906, there existed in Iran, as in most Moslem countries, two systems of law, corresponding roughly to the common law and canon law of Europe during medieval times. The canon law, known as the *Qanun-i-shari'a*, was founded on the precepts and injunctions of the Koran, as amplified by the traditions and the commentaries; it was administered by the clergy. The term *Qanun-i-shari'a* means literally, 'the road to the watering place,'<sup>1</sup> a phrase which conveys an idea of its original purpose and scope. While the Koranic law theoretically applied to every act of man, it gradually was confined to questions of faith and morals, domestic relations, inheritance, and vows. The acknowledgment of vows, corresponding to notarial acts, gave the clergy considerable authority in commercial transactions, and the regulation of inheritances placed questions of land tenure largely in their hands.

The common law, known as '*ada*, or '*urf*, represented the body of local custom in any place, and governed transactions not specifically covered by the *Shari'a*, as well as relationships based on traditions that frequently antedated the *Shari'a*. Among these were water rights, landlord-tenant relations, grazing privileges, and frequently taxes.

In addition, there existed the laws promulgated by edict of the sovereign, which came to be known as the *Qanun*. These related to taxes, foreign affairs, public administration, and public security.

The administration of these three bodies of law was never

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, Sir Arnold, *Persia*, London, 1933, p. 218.

clearly defined. The shah was theoretically absolute, and held the life and property of his subjects in his hand. Violators of public safety, conspirators against the throne, robbers and malefactors, as well as officials and functionaries, could be put to death or otherwise punished as the shah or his ministers might decree. Fugitives from the sovereign's justice could, however, take sanctuary (*bast*) in certain shrines or mosques (which corresponded to the Biblical 'cities of refuge'), and in certain cases of death penalty the sentence required confirmation by the ecclesiastical courts. The legal administration was further complicated by the fact that the highest tribunal of ecclesiastical justice was composed of the *mujtahids* of the most sacred shrines of the *Shi'as*, which were in Kerbela and Najaf, outside the country, in adjoining Iraq. In this respect the shah's justice operated under a disability from which the sultan's was free, since the sovereign of Turkey combined the temporal authority of the sultan with the ecclesiastical and spiritual authority of the caliph.

A further element complicating the legal system was its concept of private rather than public justice. The idea of the State as a party in interest had never developed to any degree in juridical concepts. A crime was an offense against the injured party; the principle of *lex talionis*, or life for a life, prevailed, in which the injured, or his relatives, could demand blood money or satisfaction in kind. In civil cases, arbitration was the rule, with or without the interposition of the State.

#### *Legal Reforms and Limitations on Ecclesiastical Privileges*

In 1907, a Fundamental Law was enacted setting forth the general principles of criminal and civil procedure. This was followed in 1912 by a law setting up a judicial administration modeled upon European standards, with a hierarchy of courts, and rules of civil procedure; in 1914 a system of commercial courts was provided. These enactments remained, however, generally unenforced, owing to clerical opposition.

In 1922, shortly after Riza Khan came into power, a law for the voluntary registration of properties and documents was enacted as a beginning in administrative and judicial reform, but the violent opposition of the mullahs, who instigated rioting before the parliament building, prevented the enactment

of a new commercial code which would have deprived them of jurisdiction in civil cases. After his accession to the throne, however, Riza Shah Pahlavi had more success: in 1926, a new penal code, abrogating the *lex talionis*, was instituted without incident. This was followed by other enactments that gradually abolished the *Shari'a*. In 1928, the application of the civil code was extended and the juridical opinions of the mullahs, given on the *Shari'a*, were declared to be without authority; in the same year, the authority of the clergy over titles was abolished by the establishment of a State Registration Bureau, and the requirement of its certification for all titles to property. By a law enacted 3 January 1929, the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts was limited to domestic relations, personal status, and notarial acts. Two years later, on 14 August 1931, ecclesiastical authority over domestic relations was limited by a requirement that all marriage contracts and acts of divorce be registered with a civil official, and by an abrogation of certain provisions of the *Shari'a* regarding marital status. This law did not define marriage requirements, although by an administrative circular the civil notaries were instructed not to certify marriages in cases where the woman was less than sixteen years of age.

A further limitation on the power of the clergy was the seizure of the pious foundations (*waqfs*), representing estates dedicated by the pious to religious or charitable work. The revenues from the pious foundations, formerly used largely to defray instruction in the Koran, were now dedicated to State education, charities, and hospitals.

In 1931, certain of the more famous mosques were thrown open to foreign visitors. In 1935, laws or edicts were passed simplifying funeral ceremonies, further defining marital status, abolishing titles, abolishing the celebration of Moharram and Id-i-Kourban.

That year also marked the abolition of an ancient custom of reverence, that of keeping the head covered. On the opening of the tenth session of the Majlis, on 6 June 1935, the Shah removed his military cap on entering the parliament building, while at the same time, by pre-concert, all the deputies followed his example. On this occasion the Imam Suna', the prin-

cial *mujtahid*, and the other Moslem dignitaries were conspicuous by their absence.<sup>2</sup>

These various reforms were not achieved without considerable opposition from the clergy and the more fanatical of the Moslem faith. In 1927, in protest against the extension of conscription to theological students, the mullahs instigated the closing of the bazaars, and in further protest, a number of leading mullahs took sanctuary at the Qum shrine. So influential were they still that the Shah had to send the prime minister and the minister of court to treat with them.

The most violent opposition occurred in connection with what must be regarded as the most notable of Riza Shah Pahlavi's reforms, the removal of the veil and the partial emancipation of women. The clerical opposition to this was signalized by a diatribe delivered in the Qum mosque on the Persian New Year in 1928. The shrine, which encloses the tomb of Fatima, sister of the Imam Reza, eighth in the line of *imams*, is particularly revered by Moslem women, and is provided with a gallery where women may sit. The Queen of Iran had come to Qum to attend the services. During the sermon, as she sat in the gallery, she unveiled her face, advertently or inadvertently. The *mujtahid* turned from his sermonizing to reprimand her, and went on to excoriate the new tendencies and to denounce the Shah's encouragement of them. The result was that the crowd demonstrated against the Queen.

On this occasion, the Shah did not temporize, but proceeded immediately to Qum with two armored cars and a body of troops. He entered the mosque without removing his boots and proceeded to flog the *mujtahid*. To humiliate the clergy further, he ordered the arrest of several persons who had taken sanctuary in the mosque.

This incident marked the end of clerical influence as a major factor in government policy, though as late as 1935 violent opposition again was shown to the introduction of Western headgear.<sup>3</sup> In Meshed, under the incitation of one

<sup>2</sup> This summary of the Shah's legal and prescriptive reforms is drawn largely from the account by Henry Filmer, *op. cit.* pp. 360 ff.

<sup>3</sup> European dress, except for headgear, had already been prescribed by law some years earlier (1927). Headgear, however, is throughout the East a peculiar mark of one's nationality or religion.



Sheik Bahloul, a riotous demonstration occurred in the Shrine of the Imam Riza. Nothing better illustrates the contempt with which the clerical influence was now held than the manner in which the situation was met. Troops were brought into the sacred precincts and the mob ruthlessly dispersed by machine-gun fire.

### III

#### FOREIGN RELATIONS

THE FOREIGN policy of Riza Shah Pahlavi was at the outset clear and explicit, but before the end of his reign it had become petty and equivocal.

Five days after his *coup d'état* in 1921, the Majlis had rejected the Anglo-Persian Agreement and effected a composition with Russia. The Anglo-Persian Agreement has generally been regarded, both in Iran and abroad, as an attempt on the part of British imperialism to take advantage of the collapse of Russia and to put Iran securely in the British pocket. British foreign policies were then being guided by Lord Curzon, long noted for his espousal of British interests in the Middle East as well as for his suspicions of Russia, and credited with the policy of 'encirclement' of Russia following the Revolution.

It is likely that at a future day, when the terms of the Anglo-Persian Agreement are examined more dispassionately, it will be concluded that it was less than nefarious and represented a reasonable effort at co-operation with the Iranian people with the object of establishing a strong and independent Iran. Lord Curzon always protested that Britain had no designs on Iranian territory, and that he never favored territorial aggrandizement in Iran. As early as 1892 he had stated his views of British policy in Iran as follows:

If then, I were asked what is the policy of Great Britain toward Persia, I should answer in the following terms. It is not now, nor at any time in this century has it been, one of territorial cupidity. England does not covet one square foot of Persian territory. In the war of 1856-57 British forces captured, and, for a short time, held both Bushire and Kharak Island, in the Gulf, and Mohammerah and Ahwaz on the Karun. It would have been easy to establish a permanent foothold on the Gulf, and to have settled the Karun question for all time by retaining these positions. In the absence of any reason rendering such a step compulsory, we gave them up. The Persians

themselves, who had fully expected to lose Bushire, were bewildered at our clemency, and have come to believe that they ousted us by superior force. But the action remains an indisputable evidence of pacific purpose, and may appositely be contrasted with the Russian tactics at Ashurada in the North. . . In other words, the development of the industrial and material resources of Persia, the extension of her commerce, the maintenance of her integrity, the rehabilitation of her strength—these, under the pressure and by the aid of a friendly alliance, are the objects of British policy. The time for an offensive and defensive alliance has passed.<sup>1</sup>

The purposes and possible results of the Anglo-Persian Agreement are now, of course, an academic question. While refusing to ratify the Agreement, the Majlis, influenced by the fervid self-denying declarations of the Russian revolutionary government, concluded an agreement with that government by which the independence and integrity of Iran was guaranteed in even more categorical terms; at the end of World War II, however, it was the Russians, rather than the British, of whom the Iranians found themselves unable to rid their country.

#### A. RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

The Russian Revolution had begun in November 1917. As early as 18 January 1918, Leon Trotsky, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Republic of Russia, handed a note to the Iranian minister in Petrograd, declaring null and void the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, and undertaking to secure the evacuation of all Russian troops from Iran. On 16 June 1918, and again on 19 June 1918, N. R. Brovine, the Soviet diplomatic agent, delivered notes to the Iranian foreign office, assuring the Iranian government of its anti-imperialistic intentions. The note of 19 June 1918, read as follows:

The weakness of the Persian Government has been due generally to the fact that her rights and her national wealth have fallen into the hands of foreign imperialism and capitalism. The revolutionary nation of Russia, after having done away with these internally in Russia, is convinced that its dear brother—the neighboring nation of Persia—should be free from the oppression of this same capitalism

<sup>1</sup> *Op.cit.* vol. II, pp. 619, 620.

and would like to see Persia free herself from the clutches of foreign capitalism. Therefore, it is stated that the Ministry is hereafter at liberty to consider all former concessions which the late Russian regime obtained for itself in Persia, including mineral, fishing, and transportation concessions (secured through the use of the bayonet or powerful men of Persia) as no longer under the protection of the Russian Republic. It is to be hoped that Persia will keep its interests for its own benefit and never deliver them into foreign hands.<sup>2</sup>

These notes were followed by one from Chicherin, Soviet foreign minister, on 26 June 1918, specifically setting forth the rights renounced. This renunciation made no reservation of the Caspian Sea fisheries, and declared moreover that the Caspian Sea should be freely open to the navigation of vessels bearing the Iranian flag. This declaration regarding the Caspian Sea was reaffirmed in a note of 31 May 1920, from the Russian Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

The treaty of 26 February 1921 confirmed most of these renunciations and was favorable enough in its terms. Nevertheless, by then the idealism of the earlier Russian declarations was already sicklied over with a strong cast of realism: while the Caspian fisheries concession was renounced, the Agreement provided that a new concession should be negotiated; it provided further that none of the concessions renounced should be granted to a third power, or to the subjects of a third power,<sup>3</sup> and, most importantly, reserved the right to Russia to occupy<sup>4</sup> Iran in case of a threat to Russia by a third power.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Perso-Russian Treaties and Notes of 1828-1931*. Translation from the original Persian documents made by J. Rives Childs, 1934-5, while he was Secretary to Legation at Teheran. Typescript in Library of Congress.

<sup>3</sup> Art. 13. 'The Persian Government promises on its part not to place under the possession, authority, or use of any third government, or the subjects of any third government, the concessions and properties transferred to Persia according to this treaty, and to preserve all the above-mentioned rights for the welfare of the people of Persia.'

<sup>4</sup> Literally, 'to send troops' into Iran. The language of diplomacy draws a distinction between 'occupation' and 'sending in troops,' but under the conditions the practical effects were the same.

<sup>5</sup> Art. 6. 'Both the High Contracting Parties are agreed that in case on the part of third countries there should be attempts by means of armed intervention to realize a rapacious policy on the territory of Persia or to turn the territory of Persia into a base for military action against the

Moreover, despite the solemn declarations of the Agreement, and despite the withdrawal of Russian support from the 'Soviet Republic of Gilan,' the Russians continued to occupy the port of Enzeli and used the occupation to compel an agreement in its favor on the Caspian fisheries question.

The importance of the Caspian fisheries arises from the fact that the sturgeon, prized both for itself and for caviar, is to be found only in the southern Caspian waters. A concession for the monopoly of these fisheries had been granted in 1876 to a Russian named Stepan Lionosoff, and renewed at various times subsequently; at the time of the Revolution, the undertaking employed several thousand persons and had equipment on the Iranian coast consisting of warehouses, docks, curing vats, refrigerators, and other installations valued at several million dollars.

In accordance with the Soviet declarations of 1918 and 1919, the Iranian government annulled the concession; but as the properties had fallen into the hands of the Soviet government, this government continued to operate them. In 1922, the Iranian government was induced to give a monopoly of the fisheries to one Hassan Kiadeh, an official of the Soviet Department of Trade, for an annual payment of 50,000 tomans, effective for one year. Meantime, the Lionossofs, who resided in Teheran, had protested the abrogation of the concession, and in 1922 an arbitration commission of Iranian jurists gave a decision that the cancellation of the concession had been illegal, and that in compensation for the damages sustained by the concessionaires the concession should be extended for fifteen years on condition that 50 per cent of the net profits be paid to the government. •

In 1924, the Soviet government proposed to the Iranian government that the fisheries be leased to a company, the shares

R.S.F.S.R. and if thereby danger should threaten the frontiers of the R.S.F.S.R. or its federated associates, and if the Persian Government after warning on the part of the Government of the R.S.F.S.R. shall prove to be itself not strong enough to prevent this danger, the Government of the R.S.F.S.R. shall have the right to send its troops into Persian territory in order to take necessary military measures in the interests of self-defense. When the danger has been removed the Government of the R.S.F.S.R. undertakes immediately to withdraw its troops beyond the frontiers of Persia.'

of which should be held equally by the two governments.

In 1922, however, the Iranian government had appointed an American, A. C. Millspaugh, as administrator general of the finances of Iran, with broad authority. Millspaugh, on examining the proposed contract, refused to approve it on the grounds that it offered no practical solution to the question. He refused, moreover, to receive into the treasury the check for one hundred thousand tomans which the Soviet government offered on account.<sup>6</sup>

In 1926, as a measure of coercing the Iranian government to accede to Soviet views, an embargo was placed on all Iranian exports to Russia, on the pretext of the necessity of conserving Soviet funds. This measure produced a great hardship on Iranian merchants, and when, in 1927, Millspaugh resigned over differences concerning his powers, the fisheries question was renewed with greater success. On 1 October 1927, a concession was granted to the Soviet government on substantially the terms it had originally laid down. The concession provided that the fisheries should be operated by a jointly owned company, that 80,000 tomans should be paid annually to the Iranian government as rentals, and that the profits of the company should be divided equally between the two shareholders. As, however, the product is sold almost exclusively to the Soviet government,<sup>7</sup> at terms dictated by the Soviet government, profits have been negligible or none.

At the time that the fisheries concession was signed, other outstanding questions between the two countries were cleared up—in four other agreements signed on the same date. Among these was one by which Iranian exports to Russia were limited to a maximum annual value of 50,000,000 rubles, and Soviet imports to Iran to 90 per cent of Iranian exports. The port of Enzeli was now returned to Iranian hands, and, to celebrate this diplomatic triumph, was renamed Pahlavi in honor of the Shah.

This diplomatic triumph—if such it can be called—was of short duration. Nominally, the Soviet government, now under the control of Joseph Stalin, had renounced the earlier Trot-

<sup>6</sup> Millspaugh, A. C., *The American Task in Persia*, New York, 1926, pp. 294 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Sturgeon are forbidden (*haram*) to Moslems as unclean.

sky doctrine of world revolution, and treated its eastern and southern neighbors as equals. Gradually, however, as the dream of world revolution faded, the spirit of Muscovite Russia revived, and the testament of Peter the Great was re-read, refurbished, and reapplied. The government had also turned back three hundred years for its commercial policies, adopting those of Elizabethan England, of granting rich monopolies to favored instrumentalities, as models of Marxian enlightenment. The system was now extended in 1930 to the south and east through the creation of a State agency known as the Eastern Trading Company, with a monopoly on foreign trade with Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan. The Iranian merchants, who are above all individualistic and competitive, now found themselves under the disadvantage of dealing with an instrumentality enjoying perquisites and resources that they could not match.

The Eastern Trading Company employed all the tactics of large-scale capitalism, which the American government had long before outlawed and declared contrary to public policy. By dumping, withholding from sale, favoritism, and by other practices, it was able to control the market, purchase Iranian products at such prices as it cared to pay, and to exact the utmost for what it sold.

Consequently, in 1931, the Iranian government, to protect its economy, declared a monopoly on foreign trade, but it did not go further than to fix import quotas, which did not effectively meet the situation.<sup>8</sup> In 1932 and 1933, the bazaar instituted a boycott against Russian goods as a measure of self-defense and counter-reprisal. The Soviet government intervened on behalf of its instrumentality, and by pressure at Teheran forced the abandonment of the boycott. The Iranian government undertook now to meet the situation by the creation of its own State monopoly for trade with Russia, but to this the Russians objected that it would be discriminatory.

Meantime, however, Soviet policy towards Iran was in other respects conciliatory. The various agreements concluded in 1927 had assured Iran of transit rights through Russia for persons, merchandise, and the posts, and gave Iran the tariff

<sup>8</sup> Filmer, Henry, *op. cit.* p. 355.

autonomy which it had not enjoyed since the Treaty of Turkomanчай. This treaty had fixed at a flat 5 per cent the import and export dues which the Iranian government could levy on goods interchanged with Russia, and under the principle of equality of treatment this rate had applied to trade with all other countries, except Turkey, with whom a special convention existed. In 1903, the rates fixed by the Treaty of Turkomanчай had been modified, but despite the renunciation of special interests in the Agreement of 26 February 1921, full tariff autonomy was not realized until 1927.

#### B. RELATIONS WITH GREAT BRITAIN

While Russo-Iranian relations were thus being adjusted to mutual satisfaction, Anglo-Iranian relations were less happy. The British had finally, in 1924, withdrawn the last of their troops from Iran; but in 1925 they gave moral support to Sheik Khazal, chief of the Muhaisin Arabs, in his defiance of the government's authority, which required the Shah to proceed against the sheik with an army before he surrendered.

With the defeat of the clergy over the reform of the legal system, and the introduction of Western legal codes, the government of Iran now undertook to abolish the Capitulatory rights which the nationals of various foreign powers enjoyed. Most of these rights had been obtained by the Treaty of Turkomanчай with Russia and the extension of the provisions of this treaty under 'most favored nations' clauses in other treaties. In April 1927, the government promulgated its Judicial Regulations, which provided for certain legal safeguards for foreign subjects, including the right of foreign subjects to demand arbitration in cases of lawsuits with Iranian subjects, and on 10 May 1927, formal announcement was made of the abrogation of the Capitulatory rights, to take effect within twelve months.

While the French government promptly accepted the abrogation on behalf of French citizens, the British government objected, on the ground that the status of British subjects rested upon a legal basis quite apart from the Treaty of Turkomanчай, namely, various rescripts of the shahs issued earlier than



the Treaty of Turkomanchai, and upon general international law.

Interlocked with this dispute was the question of tariff autonomy, which the British were reluctant to concede, and the desire of the British government to obtain air-transit rights along the southern Iranian coast for the London-Bombay route of the British Imperial Airways Ltd.<sup>9</sup> The Iranian government had steadily refused to grant such rights.

On 10 May 1928, however, a treaty was concluded between the two governments by which these questions were settled to the satisfaction of the Iranian government, with the latter indicating its willingness to grant temporary landing rights to Imperial Airways. A permit for three years was in fact issued. Imperial Airways, however, unable to obtain a more extended lease, which would warrant the capital expenditures involved in constructing landing fields, hangars, and other installations, in 1932 shifted its route to the Arabian coast. By that time, airplanes had reached a development that rendered the cross-water route less hazardous than formerly, and the necessity for the Iranian-coast route largely disappeared.<sup>10</sup>

The oil fields of southern Iran, worked by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, had flourished, and by 1930 production was running from 5½ to 6 million tons annually, upon which royalties paid to the government amounted to more than £1,250,000 annually, and provided nearly 20 per cent of the total revenue of the State. This compared with about \$80,000 annually which the government was receiving from the Russians for the valuable Caspian Sea fisheries concession in the north. In 1931, however, production of oil suffered a sharp drop, as a result of world conditions, which brought a decline in the royalties paid.

On 27 November 1932, on the grounds that the company had violated the terms of the agreement, the government abruptly canceled the oil concession, an act celebrated by a two-day holiday throughout the country. The British government violently protested, going so far as to make a naval demonstration in the Persian Gulf, but since the Shah remained firm, the British adopted the more peaceful method

<sup>9</sup> Now British Overseas Airways Co.

<sup>10</sup> Wilson, *Sir Arnold*, op. cit. pp. 232 ff.

of an appeal to the League of Nations. The Iranian government made a spirited defense before the League Council, showing facts in support of its act and asserting that since this was an internal matter it should be dealt with by Iranian courts. The British government concluded to accept negotiations, and in May 1933, a new concession was negotiated, which gave much more favorable terms to the Iranian government, among which were a higher royalty rate, a restriction of the concession to an area of not more than 100,000 square miles, and the undertaking on the part of the company to distribute its petroleum products more generally throughout Iran. As a result of this last, the company erected a refinery at Kermanshah to exploit the marginal Iranian oil at the Naft-i-Shah field on the borders of Iraq, as well as to serve the Iranian trade.

A question that still colors relations between Iran and Great Britain is that of sovereignty over the island of Bahrein, off the western coast of Iran in the Persian Gulf, long famous for its pearl fisheries and of considerable importance for its oil resources, which were discovered in the early 1930's and which since then have been under development by two American companies.<sup>11</sup> Persian sovereignty had extended over Bahrein until 1783; Arabs then seized control, and held the island until 1906. In that year, Great Britain acquired sovereignty when British diplomacy induced the ruling sheik to place his domain under the protection and sovereignty of the British king. Iran never recognized this acquisition of sovereignty by Great Britain, particularly since the island was converted into a British naval base, and in 1929, and at intervals ever since, has made protests, asserting Iranian rights to sovereignty. In 1934, a protest was lodged with the League of Nations, but without results. The latest assertion of Iranian claims was made in 1946, apparently on the instigation of Soviet Russia.

### C. RELATIONS WITH OTHER POWERS

A major achievement of Riza Shah Pahlavi's foreign policy was the establishment of more cordial relations between Iran

<sup>11</sup> The Texas Company and Standard Oil Company of California.

and its Moslem neighbors. Historically, relations with Turkey on the west and Afghanistan on the east had been unfriendly, if not hostile, partly because of political rivalries and largely because of the difference in religion, the Shi'a sect of Islam, to which Iranians adhere, being regarded as heterodox by the Sunnis of Turkey and Afghanistan. During the nineteenth century two wars had been fought between Iran and Afghanistan, in the second of which the British had intervened; the last war between Turkey and Iran had occurred in 1821-3, but in 1906, during the Constitutional revolution in Iran, Turkey had occupied the Urmiah plain in an attempt to secure control of this area, and during World War I had again invaded this territory.

Stimulated by Russian diplomacy, which was directed to securing peaceful relations among its southern neighbors, a treaty was signed with Afghanistan in 1923, and two years later the frontier between the two countries was delimited; in 1928, this was strengthened by a security pact. The following year, the Amir of Afghanistan, Amanullah, paid a State visit to Teheran, which, aside from its political significance, was notable for the public appearance of his Queen without the customary veil.

In 1926, a treaty of perpetual peace was signed with Turkey, which among other things regularized the customs and postal services between the two countries. It did not, however, settle the frontier question in Kurdistan, and the following year strain developed over Turkish operations against the Kurds which threatened for a time to rupture diplomatic relations. A new treaty of friendship was signed in 1932, and in 1934 the Shah paid a ceremonial visit to the President of the Turkish Republic—which was, incidentally, the only occasion during his reign in which he set foot outside Iranian territory. In 1937, and again in 1939, further accords were reached between the two governments, regulating judicial and extradition questions, communications, customs and quarantine problems, and finally defining the frontier.

With Iraq, which had been separated from the Turkish Empire following World War I, relations continued to be unsatisfactory until 1928. One source of dissension was the fact that the principal shrines of pilgrimage for the Shi'a Moslems of

Iran are located in Iraq, and the ecclesiastical authorities of these shrines continued to exert their reactionary influence against the program of reforms that was being instituted in Iran. The question of extraterritorial privileges for Iranian pilgrims also aggravated relations between the two governments, the Iranian government claiming for its nationals the same extraterritorial privileges that Iraq accorded to other foreigners. A further irritation was the drain on the Iranian monetary supply caused by the expenditures of the pilgrims in Iraq, as well as the smuggling out of silver by the pilgrims. The fact that Iraq was a British mandate, by right of which Great Britain continued to maintain military forces in Iraq, and hence on the Iranian border, was also annoying to the Shah.

Boundary questions also disturbed relations. The frontier had been defined in 1914, by an agreement between Turkey and Iran, by which the waters of the Shatt-el-Arab, which separate Iranian Khuzistan from Iraq, were assigned to Turkish jurisdiction. The development of the great oil refineries at Abadan, on the Shatt-el-Arab, required a reconsideration of the boundary, since it meant that the port of Abadan could be reached only by passing through the territorial waters of Iraq. As a result of these differences, Iran refused to accord recognition to Iraq or to maintain diplomatic relations with its government.

Following the agreement with Great Britain, by which Iran obtained British recognition of tariff autonomy and the abolition of the Capitulatory privileges, Iran consented to extend recognition to Iraq, and a treaty of accord was reached shortly thereafter; in 1932, following the withdrawal of the British and the establishment of Iraqi independence, King Feisal paid a State visit to Teheran. The problem of the Shatt-el-Arab remained, however, and in 1935 the matter was referred to the League of Nations. Meantime, the development of a new port at Bandar Shahpur, in Iranian waters, lessened the importance of Abadan, and in 1937 an agreement was reached which generally confirmed the 1914 boundaries but moved the line to the middle of the river opposite Abadan.

The greatest triumph of Riza Shah Pahlavi's diplomacy was the signing of a mutual pact of friendship and nonaggression

by Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Afghanistan. This took place in the Shah's palace at Saadabad on 8 July 1937. This treaty had been stimulated by the Italian invasion of Abyssinia and the fear of further European encroachments in the Middle East. It bound the signatories to forbid within their territories any foreign troops that would constitute a menace to any other signatory.

In his relations with other great powers of the West, Riza Shah Pahlavi followed an equivocal policy that did not further the country's best interests.

With Germany, there occurred a great increase in commercial interchange, and various German firms were given contracts and concessions in Iran; and German cultural and propagandist activities were intensified. The expansion of German interests in Iran was indirectly due to the policy of Imperial trade preference adopted for the British Empire at the Ottawa Conference, and by the enactment in the United States of the Hawley-Smoot tariff, the effects of both of which were to hamper British and American trade with Iran. Political relations between Germany and Iran, however, never became intimate, and several German official missions to Iran obtained only a moderately cordial welcome.

Towards the United States, which as a government had no territorial interest in Iran, and only slight commercial interest, but which through its citizens had poured out millions of dollars in philanthropy, Riza Shah Pahlavi manifested a puerile capriciousness that but for the American sense of humor would have reacted more unfavorably than it did. In March 1936, the Shah's minister in Washington, Ghaffar Jalal, while driving his car, was taken into custody by a Maryland police officer for violating the speed regulations. He was promptly released, under his diplomatic immunities, with appropriate apologies, but the Shah chose to regard the incident as an affront to the national dignity and withdrew his minister, and it was not until 1939, with the outbreak of World War II, that he resumed normal relations with the United States. From 1927 on, moreover, the activities of the missionaries in Iran had been gradually limited, through the closing of missionary schools, and by police regulations that placed restrictions upon missionary movements and preaching.

With France, also, a perverted sense of royal dignity led the Shah into a display of petulance. In 1937, a facetious French journalist published a reference to the Shah in which he made a pun upon *shah* and *chat*. It is highly offensive to a Moslem to be likened to any animal; the Shah took violent exception to the joke, directed his minister to protest, and ordered all the government-supported Iranian students in France to withdraw. The French government tactfully made such amends as it could, but the incident did not help Iranian prestige in French eyes.

## IV

### ECONOMIC REFORMS

**A**MONG the major undertakings of Riza Shah Pahlavi was a program of economic reforms designed to give his country a greater measure of the material power enjoyed by the nations of the West. Of all the achievements of his reign, the economic reforms have been the most illusory, and they would warrant little discussion if it were not for the example they offer. They are of interest for the reason that they display, in microcosm, the problems of the larger sovereignties of the West, and permit their examination in perspective. It is possible to observe, in the economic history of modern Iran, the same tendencies that have appeared in Europe and America since the beginning of the century, and the same forces at work, stripped of their complexities, that have produced so much of the conflict and confusion of twentieth-century industrial civilization.

The characteristics of the change that occurred in Iran during the years 1921-41, may be summarized as follows: an increasing intervention of the State in the livelihood of its citizens; a growth of metropolitanism, and a hectic prosperity in the cities; finally, an increasing dependence on money as a tool of enterprise and means of subsistence, with a multiplication of financial institutions, financial instruments, monetary regulations, and the introduction and deterioration of paper money.

These events all went hand in hand and may best be described by a general presentation, mainly chronological, of the policies and programs followed. A separate section will, however, be devoted to the changes in the monetary system.

#### A. COMMUNICATIONS

Early in his regime, Riza Shah Pahlavi determined upon an improvement of the internal communications of the country,

primarily directed to military needs in order to effect control over the distant provinces of the realm, but also designed to assist in the movement of internal trade. To this end, an extensive system of highways was projected, including a railway system. In 1921, the only railways of consequence in Iran consisted of an 85-mile, broad-gauge line connecting Tabriz with the Russian frontier, together with a 25-mile branch line to Lake Urmiah, and some 40 miles of narrow-gauge railway in the oil fields.<sup>1</sup> Riza Shah Pahlavi projected a standard-gauge (4' 8½") line running from the Persian Gulf northward to Teheran, with branches leading from Teheran to the Caspian and to Tabriz. In laying out the route, however, he had to compromise with political realities. For fifty years the project of a trans-Iranian railway had been a subject of correspondence between London and Moscow. Great Britain was unwilling to sanction any system that would connect with the Russian line and afford a means of communication from Russia to the Persian Gulf and India. Russia, likewise, would tolerate no system that would afford connections east and west between the Mediterranean and India. Iranian considerations for the independence of Iran agreed with both Russian and British views. The result was that a route neither north-south nor east-west was selected, but one running in a generally northeast-southwest direction. This route served also a distinctly Iranian political purpose in that while it touched no important city except Teheran, it did traverse the areas inhabited by the principal nomadic tribes, the control of which had always been a problem for the government.

The railway was largely completed by 1939; it constitutes today one of the most spectacular examples of railway building in the world. In the construction, the engineering skill of the principal nations of Europe and America was engaged—American, British, German, Swedish, and Danish, as well as Iranian. In the course of its 870 miles from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea, it passes from sea level to an altitude of 9,500 feet, crosses 4,102 bridges, and passes through 224 tunnels, some of which corkscrew inside the mountain. At some

<sup>1</sup> A 50-mile railway line also connected Zahedan with the British-Indian railway system, but in 1931 trains ceased to operate over this line.



places, three levels of track are visible on the side of a gorge; in one notable location the railway traverses 6 bridges and 4 tunnels within a radius of 900 feet. Along one stretch, between Andimeshk and Dorud, 60 out of 90 miles consist of tunnels.

Along with the railway program was a similar program of modernizing the capital and the other principal cities by new public buildings, new streets, parks, and an extension of electric and telephone service.

#### B. FINANCES

All this, together with the demands of the army, called for large sums of money. Riza Shah Pahlavi was determined to avoid the mistake of his predecessors, who had mortgaged the country's resources and sovereignty for foreign loans, and proposed to finance his program by taxation. This required a reorganization of the financial administration in order effectively to collect the taxes levied, and to assure that the taxes collected did not evaporate while flowing from the taxpayer to the treasury. In 1922, while Riza Shah Pahlavi was still Riza Khan and minister of war, the government applied to the U. S. Department of State, as it had in 1910, for recommendations for a financial adviser. A. C. Millspaugh, economic adviser in the Department, was suggested, and was engaged as administrator general of the finances, together with a staff of assistants.

#### *Foreign Advisers*

The powers granted Millspaugh were extensive. \* Under their terms the government could neither grant any commercial or industrial concession nor take any decision on a financial question without consultation with him, and his approval was required for any expenditure or the assumption of any financial obligation. Millspaugh held the powers of a minister, and regularly attended the meetings of the council of ministers.

The mission remained in Iran for five years, when a disagreement arose between Millspaugh and the government over the powers conferred, and Millspaugh resigned. The results of his mission he subsequently characterized as 'partly

illusory and almost wholly transitory.<sup>2</sup> During the period, however, considerable order was brought into the tax system: antiquated and inequitable taxes were abolished and new taxes were introduced; the revenues were increased and the budget brought into approximate balance.

Riza Khan placed his authority as minister of war and the persuasive powers of the army behind the tax collectors, with the resultant collection of considerable sums of back taxes and disputed taxes. The accounts were unified and centralized so that the sums collected flowed without interruption into the treasury.

Millspaugh was led, however, to recommend financial measures destructive of the indigenous livelihood. Inbred with the idea of a balanced budget, he insisted on collecting back taxes, even though it entailed considerable hardship and promoted insurrection, and was willing to accept the aid of the army in establishing his financial agents throughout the country to enforce the payment. In spite of serious crop failures, he succeeded in increasing the internal taxes by 12 per cent in the third year of his administration, and almost succeeded in balancing the budget. Increasing revenues, however, stimulated expenditure, and increased expenditure created demand for more revenue. In 1924, Millspaugh proposed the levy of a tax on tobacco and a little later in the same year proposed a government monopoly on sugar and tea, the revenue from which was to be assigned to railroad construction, and a tax on matches, the revenue from which was to be assigned to sanitation. Indicative of the importance of these measures was the estimate that the sugar and tea monopoly would produce some 5 million tomans (approximately \$5,000,000) a year.<sup>3</sup>

Sugar and tea were commodities of great importance to the peasants and the poor. The establishment of these monopolies meant that the burden of taxation was shifted to those least able to bear it. Millspaugh's tax originally was light, but the rates steadily increased under pressure for revenue, and by the end of 1939 were some fifteen times the original rates.

<sup>2</sup> *Americans in Persia*, Washington, 1946, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> Millspaugh, A. C., *The American Task in Persia*, New York, 1925, p. 242.

## C. STATE ENTERPRISE

The government was learning how to squeeze money out of the country: by 1941, one could hardly find a samovar or a rug in the home of a peasant or an artisan, so severely had they been ground down by taxation.

The government now embarked upon other programs of expenditure. While the peasants were being taxed to pay for railroads that many of them would never see and from which they could derive no visible benefit, and for 'sanitation' to improve life in the cities where they would not live, the metropolitan population was receiving the benefits of a vast program of expenditure for streets, parks, and public buildings.

The capital was a particular beneficiary of embellishment. Besides several new palaces, a number of magnificent avenues were created, the principal of which, Avenue Shahriza, was later dubbed 'Park Avenue' by American soldiers. Besides avenues, parks, and numerous new buildings to house the ministries, construction was started on an opera house and a stock exchange.

With all this building, however, neither sewage systems nor water mains were constructed, and to this day no city in Iran is furnished with these utilities. The water supply flows down open channels in the streets, on the beneficent principle that it should be free to all and not the subject of monopoly by confinement to hidden conduits. There may have been something deep-rooted in the reluctance to place it underground for the sight of flowing water in the arid streets is refreshing to the spirit, however deleterious to the health.

The system of military conscription also aggravated the economic problem. The youth of the country were taken from their villages just at the age when they were becoming productive in the fields. The policy was to assign the conscripts to military centers, usually the cities, distant from their native districts, on the theory that their view would be broadened and their patriotism intensified by contact with the varied peoples and places of the realm. After their term of service, they were discharged where they were, without transportation home. The general effect of this was that the young men were

left either without the means or without the desire to return to their homes, and instead sought livelihood in the city of their discharge, and added to the increasing number of proletariat.

In order to stimulate the local production of goods to supplant imports, the government created or subsidized companies to manufacture various products. Besides the State Railways, which was the largest of the State enterprises, the State undertook sugar refining, match manufacture, boot and shoe manufacture, button manufacture, fruit canning, jute extraction and processing, vegetable-oil extraction, tobacco manufacture, shipbuilding, glassmaking, paper production, as well as the operation of iron foundries, coal mines, cement works, copper mines, and smelters, soap and glycerine manufacture. Before the end of Riza Shah Pahlavi's reign, there were some 150 major undertakings, State owned, financed, or subsidized. In addition to these, projects were on foot for the manufacture of chemicals, rubber, soda, and creosote, but the abdication of the Shah in 1941 and the Russian and British occupation brought an abrupt end to the program.

Indicative of the extent to which State enterprise was carried was *Irantour*, a corporation to promote tourist trade, which built a number of magnificent hotels in various resorts, furnished in Pompeian luxury, equipped with chrome-plated plumbing (that seldom worked), ballrooms, and Hungarian dance bands.

The operation of the State enterprises eventually became a financial farce. While nominally under government supervision, actually they were the possession of the various managers who were placed in charge. No uniform system of accounting was established, and the government was seldom able to obtain an accounting of the operations. Balance sheets and income statements would be submitted, which always showed a profit, but the profits were usually shown to have been reinvested in extensions and capital additions. There was moreover a continual application to the government, on the part of the managers, for new funds for expansion of operations, accompanied by such glowing prospectuses that the government could not fail to grant the funds requested. Theoretically profitable,

they actually constituted an increasing drain upon the treasury.

To find new revenue sources by which to finance these expenditures, the government extended the monopoly system. The sugar and tea monopolies, which Millspaugh had recommended, were followed by the establishment of State monopolies in tobacco, automobile imports, textiles and carpets, matches, opium, and others. All in all some twenty-seven monopolies were created by the end of the Shah's reign.

Monopolies were, however, not entirely new in Iranian experience. It had been traditional practice for the government to receive agricultural taxes in kind, and as a result the government was always a substantial holder of wheat and barley. These cereals were stored in government *ambars*, and were released, as necessity required, to maintain the bread supply in the cities.<sup>4</sup> The manipulation of government sales of the cereal stocks was a feature of the public administration that was both beneficial and deleterious. Powerful bakers or capitalists would often acquire a 'corner' in the market and force the price of bread to prohibitive levels. When the public outcry became loud enough the government would release enough of its wheat to break the price. Sometimes, however, the corners were acquired in connivance with the officials, and the government found itself without the stocks to sell. In such cases, when the public demanded relief, the practice frequently followed by the provincial governors was to arrest several of the leading bakers and nail them by the ears to the door of their shops. This expedient usually succeeded in effecting a reduction in the price of bread.

### *Operation of the Monopolies*

The manner of operation of one of the monopolies created during Riza Shah Pahlavi's reign, that of tobacco, will illustrate their general effect upon the indigenous livelihood of the people. Formerly, the preparation of tobacco leaf for pipe or cigarette use had been an enterprise providing a living for individual shop owners throughout the country. In every covered bazaar they could be seen, squatting in tiny cubicles that were

<sup>4</sup> During Riza Shah Pahlavi's regime, government storage elevators (called 'silos' in Iran) were erected in Teheran, which are reputed to be among the largest in the world.

both work and sales rooms, surrounded by heaps of golden leaf—the proprietor and his sons or assistants busily filling paper tubes with tobacco, shearing the tubes and packing them in pasteboard boxes labeled with the particular brand name of the dealer. The shopkeeper prepared the blend to suit his customer's taste; he sold his product at the going price, or at such premium over the going price as he could command, by the quality of his ware or his skill in bargaining. Competition was keen, and since the whole process of manufacture, from the raw product to the finished article, was open for all to see, success in business depended to a considerable degree on the superior quality the shopkeeper could give his product.

All this local trade and competition was now abolished, and the business became a government undertaking. A magnificent tobacco factory was erected in Teheran, equipped with all the modern machinery employed in American tobacco production. Two standard brands were produced for the general trade, and the customer took the one or the other. On the whole, the enterprise was well managed under the technical supervision of a British tobacco expert, and provided a substantial revenue to the treasury. Meantime, however, a gradual deterioration in the quality of the tobacco crop occurred. Since all tobacco produced, from whatever district, went into a common hopper, and emerged as a single blend, or two blends, the incentive to produce a finer and more aromatic leaf disappeared, and by 1942, a Persian cigarette was one of nondescript flavor and aroma, and wealthy Iranians were willing to pay up to fifty cents a package for American cigarettes filched from the army quartermaster.

The automobile monopoly operated somewhat differently. In theory the business was a government monopoly, but since the government was continually embarrassed for funds, the expedient was adopted of allowing private companies to purchase and import automobiles and parts, free of duty, and sell them at schedules fixed by the government, on condition that they be accountable to the government for the profits. Such was the demand for these products, however, that the companies were able to sell them at a greatly enhanced price

while returning to the government only the scheduled price, less the costs of purchase and allowable fees and expenses. As these costs and expenses usually exceeded the sales price, the government was generally the loser. The business made numerous millionaires of those who were able to obtain the favor of the government. One particular merchant, learning that the government was about to investigate his accounts, forged his profits into golden tire chains, appropriately plated, and on the pretext of urgent business in Damascus, escaped with his gains.

#### D. EFFECTS OF REFORMS

The traditional livelihood system of the country was one resting on agriculture, animal husbandry, and handicraft. A factory system such as is familiar in Europe and America was nonexistent. Most articles of machine production were imported. The object the government set before it was to render the economy as independent of such imports as possible by establishing within the country the means of their production.

The dilemma that inevitably had to be confronted was this: as soon as one want was satisfied by local means, two new wants arose that could not be satisfied except from abroad. If a machine was imported to spin cotton thread, demand arose for parts and repairs that had to be imported, or for a new machine that would weave the cotton thread into fabric; this, in turn, created a need for modern bleaching, fulling, dyeing, and printing processes, as well as for power equipment to drive the machines. All these, in turn, induced a need for roads over which these machines could be transported, trucks to transport them, and in time all the paraphernalia of motorized transportation, from garages and repair shops to roadside filling stations. Once embarked upon the simplest program of industrialization, the economy was drawn irresistibly into the vortex of industrial civilization; there was no retreat; each forward step rendered the country not less but more dependent upon the West, increasingly mortgaged to its system, and bound to the wheel of its destiny.

The effect of this can be traced faintly in the customs statistics, which, though notoriously unreliable, show total exports,

except oil, to have been 43,633,327 tomans in 1912-13, and total imports of 56,757,564 tomans. In 1930-31, exports, except oil, amounted to only 45,884,516 tomans, while imports had risen to 81,052,874 tomans.<sup>5</sup>

Of imports in the latter year, cotton piece goods constituted 21 per cent of the total; sugar and tea, 21 per cent, while machinery and iron and steel manufactures and semi-manufactures amounted to 20 per cent.

After 1931, when a new monetary system was introduced, secular comparisons lose significance, owing to the instability of the currency, but in 1938, the last prewar year, total exports, except oil, amounted to 671,152,000 rials, against total imports of 970,000,000 rials. Of imports, textiles accounted for 24 per cent; sugar and tea, 16½ per cent; and machinery and metal products, including automobiles and tires, 34 per cent. The remaining imports consisted of such articles as photographic film, writing paper, porcelain, glass, electric light bulbs, and watches.

Thus, the more fervidly the government sought to render the nation's livelihood independent of the world, the more dependent it became. The creation of factory industry, and the efforts to modernize the cities, brought people to the cities where their needs for things they could not make for themselves increased, while their desires mounted as they beheld the enticing displays in the shops. Increasing urban population brought increasing need for housing, streets, electric lights, and all the appurtenances of modern city life. This in turn created work, but not work the product of which could be exported; moreover, it increased the demand for products that could only be satisfied by importation. Trade was active, that of importers especially; a great show of prosperity was evident; everyone had money, and for this money wanted automobiles, radios, silk hose, cosmetics, imported plumbing and lighting fixtures.

<sup>5</sup> The adverse balance of trade was only partly made up by direct and indirect revenues from petroleum exports. Since the value of petroleum exports accrues directly to the concessionaire, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and only indirectly and partially to the local economy, such exports are generally excluded from the trade statistics.



*Effects upon Traditional Livelihood*

While money grew plentiful in the cities, poverty increased in the hinterland. Exports, largely handicrafts and agricultural products, were not enough to provide the dollars and sterling needed to purchase all the articles that were insatiably demanded from abroad, and the balance was not met by the revenues from the oil wells.<sup>6</sup> In order to obtain foreign exchange for the purpose, the imports of the basic necessities, such as tea and sugar, were discouraged by increases in the import tax, and the cost of these articles to the peasant doubled and tripled. Meantime, export taxes were levied on articles that the peasant and artisan produced, the brunt of which fell on them. Finally, the government assumed the monopoly of foreign exchange. The effect of this was that an exporter of, say, dried fruits, which the peasants grew, had to turn over the dollar or sterling proceeds of the sale to the government, receiving in exchange a smaller amount of Iranian currency than was his due; the foreign exchange so acquired was distributed, at a premium, among the importers of automobiles, railway equipment, radios, and whatever else the government favored as necessary to modernize the country.

All this brought a new complexity into the economy—that of the money mechanism—and to solve the problems it created, a monetary revolution occurred that was in many ways more astounding than those by which the country had passed from a political state of absolutism to one of constitutionalism, and that was as unfortunate in its effects as the other had been salutary. To this revolution, some pages may well be devoted.

<sup>6</sup> The oil royalties accruing to the government were devoted almost exclusively to the purchase abroad (principally in Great Britain) of military supplies and equipment, and did not alleviate the demand for exchange for commercial transactions.

## V

### THE MONETARY REVOLUTION

#### A. MONETARY TRADITION IN IRAN

FROM the beginning of historical times until 1931 the medium of exchange in Iran had been metal coinage struck by the sovereign in units of uniform weight and fineness. Coinage, as a monetary device, had been an invention of Middle Eastern civilization, probably in Lydia, one of the kingdoms of what is now modern Anatolia, conquered by Cyrus in 546 B.C. Coinage in Iran was instituted by Darius the Great with the striking of a silver coin known as the *siglos*, of one-half-shekel weight, or about 86½ grains, together with a gold coin known as the *daric*, of 130 grains.<sup>1</sup> The *daric* was noted for its purity and became the standard of the ancient world.

In medieval times there occurred throughout Western civilization a revolutionary change in monetary usage. This was the introduction of paper money. In China, the art of paper making had been known as early as the sixth century, A.D., and paper money was probably used there as early as the ninth century. The Mongol conquerors of China found paper money a great convenience in their statecraft: they greatly expanded its use and carried it with them in their conquests of the Middle East, from whence it passed into Europe. Marco Polo, who visited China in the thirteenth century, describes the practice as follows:

In this city of Kanbalu is the mint of the grand Khan, who may truly be said to possess the secret of the alchemists, as he has the art of producing money by the following process. He causes the bark to be stripped from those mulberry trees the leaves of which are

<sup>1</sup> The *daric* was of one-shekel weight. The weight of the shekel differed according to whether gold or silver was being weighed. Sykes comments that the English sovereign and shilling correspond almost exactly in weight to the *daric* and *siglos* (123.2 grains and 87.3 grains gross). (Op. cit. vol. 1, p. 163.)

used for feeding silk-worms, and takes from that its inner rind. This being steeped, and afterwards pounded in a mortar, until reduced to a pulp, is made into paper. When ready for use, he has it cut into pieces of money of different sizes. . . The coinage of this paper money is authenticated with as much form and ceremony as if it were actually of pure gold or silver, for to each note a number of officers, specially appointed, not only subscribe their names, but affix their signets also . . . and the act of counterfeiting it is punished as a capital offense. When thus coined in large quantities, this paper money is circulated in every part of the grand Khan's dominions; nor dares any person, at the peril of his life, refuse to accept it in payment.<sup>2</sup>

Following the introduction of paper making into Europe, in the twelfth century, paper money came into general use, and has since remained the most important instrument of statecraft, the most baffling problem of economists, and the sword of Damocles hanging over all the institutions of commerce.

#### *Traditional Monetary System*

The peoples of the Iranian plateau, however, among whom may have persisted some memory of their ancient Prophet, seem to have regarded paper money as the manifestation of the Druj, the Eternal Lie; for among all the important nations from the Pillars of Hercules to the coasts of China, they alone resisted this innovation and temptation, and by 1930 were the only people in the world with a settled civilization that continued to adhere to the ancient doctrine of a 'sound sixpence.'

In A.D. 1294, during the Mongol dominion, an attempt had been made to introduce paper money in Iran. Kai Khatu, brother of Kubla Khan, whose paper money Marco Polo described, was ruler of Iran: finding himself embarrassed with debt and impressed by the success of his brother monarch in imposing paper money, he allowed himself to be persuaded by his vizier to make the experiment. The vizier pointed out that by issuing paper money for what the king owed, and requiring his subjects to pay in gold and silver what was owed the king, wealth would flow into the royal treasury, and the

<sup>2</sup> *Travels*, ch. XVIII.

people, who would soon become accustomed to paper money, which they could have in great abundance, would be none the wiser, almost as happy, and certainly as prosperous. Accordingly, a royal edict was issued, forbidding the circulation of the precious metals as currency and substituting pieces of paper with the seal and signet of the sovereign beautifully printed thereon.

The edict was a fiasco. Mobs formed, the vizier was seized, torn to pieces, and thrown to the dogs. The throne itself tottered and the edict was repealed.<sup>3</sup>

For six hundred years, until the advent of Riza Shah Pahlavi, no ruler of Iran had dared to emit paper money,<sup>4</sup> and it is of interest that this ruler was compelled to abdicate within a decade after he began the issuance of paper money.

Thus, while Europe from the thirteenth century on gradually became accustomed to paper money and inured to its evils, and from the eighteenth century on became addicted to paper and credit and banks, Iran confined itself to opium as a narcotic and as a conjurer of dreams. It experienced no Mississippi Bubbles or tulip manias or South Sea frenzies, but continued its historical, if restrictive, tradition of metal money.

## B. ADVANTAGES OF TRADITIONAL SYSTEM

### *Metallic Money in Handicraft*

The preference for hard money, indeed the insistence upon it, rested upon the implicit needs of the country's livelihood and upon the necessities of the social and political conditions under which this livelihood was obtained. First may be mentioned the importance of a trustworthy metal coinage to handi-

<sup>3</sup> Malcolm, Sir John, *History of Persia*, London, 1815 (2 vols.), vol. I, ch. XII, pp. 430 ff. See also Curzon, op. cit. vol. I, pp. 477 ff.

<sup>4</sup> In 1889, however, a charter was issued to the British Imperial Bank of Iran which authorized it to issue paper money, but the notes so issued were limited in amount to £800,000 sterling value, and their validity was restricted to the town in which they were issued, with the result that they never became more than an insignificant factor in the total currency of the country. A similar right to issue notes was also given a Russian bank. A game played periodically by these institutions was to collect quantities of notes of the rival bank and present them for redemption with the object of embarrassing its operations.

craft economy. Gold, silver, copper, brass, and bronze, are highly prized for personal and household adornment, and metal work has been a major employment for skilled artisans. Metals workers have found not only an active local market for their wares but considerable foreign demand—the etched brass of Isfahan, for instance, being world famous, and surpassed, if at all, only by that of Damascus. Silver work, highly prized at home and abroad, is done in Zenjan and Kermanshah. Silver filigree work seems to have originated in Iran and the Zenjan work is unequaled.

Along with the exquisite workmanship to be found in Persian metal craft has continued the traditional purity of the metal. Gold and silver plating is unknown in Persian gold and silver craft. Coinage also has seldom been debased, and only infrequently has the standard been altered. This tradition seems to have characterized eastern Mediterranean civilization from the earliest times. Thus, after the Solonian reforms in Greece, a pledge not to tamper with the money was inserted in the oath of office taken by the *diakasts*.<sup>5</sup> The gold *solidus*, or bezant, struck at Byzantium first by Constantine the Great, was never altered in weight or fineness during a course of eight hundred years,<sup>6</sup> and in the sixth century, when Cosmas Indicopleustes visited Ceylon, he found the Persian coinage vying with the Byzantine in beauty and purity and in acceptance among the merchants.<sup>7</sup>

Much of the silver employed in Persian handicraft, as well as much of the copper and bronze, was obtained in the past from the melting down of coinage. Such a practice is of course forbidden in the United States and elsewhere, and while the loss to the State from the expense of coinage may be considerable, the practice was sanctioned in Iran for its salutary effect upon craft standards. It assured the trade a source of metal of

<sup>5</sup> See Grote, George, *History of Greece*, London, 1846-56, ch. xi; Boeckh, Augustus, *Public Economy of the Athenians*, trans. by Anthony Lamb, London, 1857.

<sup>6</sup> See my *Money: The Human Conflict*, Norman, 1934, Book iv.

<sup>7</sup> In Europe, a contrary tradition has prevailed, following the example set by the Roman emperors, of currency debasement as a means of increasing revenue, with the result that currency depreciation has been a characteristic of Western monetary history.

reliable content, and so long as the government continued to mint silver, the practice of melting down the coinage served to maintain and foster this important branch of economy.

### *The Practice of Hoarding*

Secondly, metal coinage not only contributed to economic stability but it is a continuing necessity for political stability. Its chief service in this connection is to provide a means by which the individual can store wealth that is independent of the vicissitudes of circumstance for its value, and does not require the certification or guarantee of the government of its worth. The use of metal coinage as a store of wealth has come to be called hoarding, and is a practice that Western statecraft has invested with opprobrium, condemned as a sin against society, and in many countries, since World War I, has been outlawed in one form or another.<sup>8</sup> Hoarding, however, must be viewed in the East in the light of the conditions of life that have prevailed, in particular the absolutism and consequent instability of governments, and the feebleness of the protection the customary law has afforded the individual in the enjoyment of life and the possession of property.

Hoarding is the means by which the peasant, the artisan, the tribesman, assures his economic independence. A coin is tangible wealth, in a form that is more familiar to him, and more trusted, than the intangible forms of paper money, bonds, savings accounts, and shares, which have been the evidences of wealth in the West. It is something he can hide and keep against his old age when he can no longer toil, something the value of which is comparatively stable in a world of change, something that will not rot or wear, and that, if he grows prosperous, he can use to adorn wife and children.

In the cities, even among the classes that have in recent years become accustomed to Western modes, such as the merchants, who have learned to carry accounts in the banks or invest in government bonds and foreign shares, a private stock of precious metal is prized and contributes to their sense of inde-

<sup>8</sup> In the United States, the possession of gold coins by individuals was prohibited in 1934.

pendence. The continuing importance of metal coinage to meet the demand for 'hoards,' even assuming the existence of a relatively stable political regime, lies in the sense of security that its possession engenders in the possessor. A prime necessity of Iran, as of other countries, is a greater political stability. A prime cause of political instability is economic unrest. A prime cure for economic unrest is a diffusion of wealth. A prime method of diffusing wealth is the distribution of metallic money among the population.

On the other hand, a secondary cause of political instability is the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and in particular in State treasuries. Since the beginning of time, a principal lure of adventure and the spur to conquest have been the hoards that sovereigns have stored up in the treasuries of their capitals. It was the prospect of the piled wealth of Persepolis that inflamed the soldiers of Alexander; it was the Peacock Throne and the treasures of gems and gold that the Moguls had collected in Delhi that spurred Nadir Shah to the invasion of India; and there can be no doubt that not the least attraction to an imperialistic power invading Iran today would be the vast sums in gold and silver and jewels that have been assembled in the vaults of the national bank. If they are not a temptation to invasion from abroad, they constitute a continuing lure to unscrupulous men within the country to acquire control of the government.

Third, a metal coinage is a necessity for the political progress towards democracy of a country like Iran. Political democracy implies economic democracy. Political democracy cannot exist in a society where a large element of the population is both landless and propertyless. If distribution of wealth is to be achieved by evolutionary rather than revolutionary means, if the instruments of production are to be the possession of the people rather than the State, then individuals must have the means of storing wealth in small amounts until they can employ it for the purchase of the more substantial capital goods. Metal coinage, and its free employment as a store of wealth, through hoards, provides the bridge, by which individuals can pass from a condition of destitution to one of possession, from vassalage to independence.

*Metal Money Among the Nomads*

The considerations presented above have been offered in general terms: their validity may be examined in the light of particular conditions in Iran. The first of these is the effect the introduction of paper money has had on the program of unifying the country.

A major political problem that faced the government was that of control of the nomadic tribes and of grafting them more firmly into the national life. This was done, in the first instance, by arms. But to hold the tribes in control, to render them loyal to the government, required a system of administration congenial to their natures and adapted to their habits. An important element of the administrative system is money in a form adapted to the necessities of nomadic existence. The tribesmen, in their dealings with the townsfolk, and with each other, like a money that they can bite, and hide, or use to adorn their womenfolk, or beat into plate for uses of their handicraft. Their complaisance with the regime, their acceptance of taxation, their general good will, are gained in large measure by payment for their wares and handiwork in good silver and gold, rather than in paper money, the value of which none of them can tell from day to day.

In their migrations in search of water and pasture for their herds and flocks, fording treacherous streams and battling through snow drifts, the tribesmen no doubt find the weight of coined wealth an encumbrance, and they should probably consider appealing the arguments of monetary economists for the 'greater convenience' of paper money; nevertheless, they prefer the heavy coin to the soluble paper, which may become a sodden mass in their baggage, unrecognizable, and rejected by merchant and banker when presented for redemption. Ordinarily, sultan and shah mean little to them; in the solitude of their tents or the security of their mountains they may cry 'Peace to Mahmud on his Golden Throne,' but as they find good silver and gold becoming scarcer and scarcer in their hands, such silver coinage as they receive debased in fineness, more and more compelled to accept the flimsy paper of the 'central bank,' as has become the rule, their grumblings mount. While this grumble may be only a murmur in the distant



capital, and never reach the ears and disturb the serenity of monetary theorists sitting in the solitudes of classroom and conference chamber, eventually the guns begin to bark in the hills at the appearance of the tax gatherer, and the spirit of revolt against the government gathers strength.

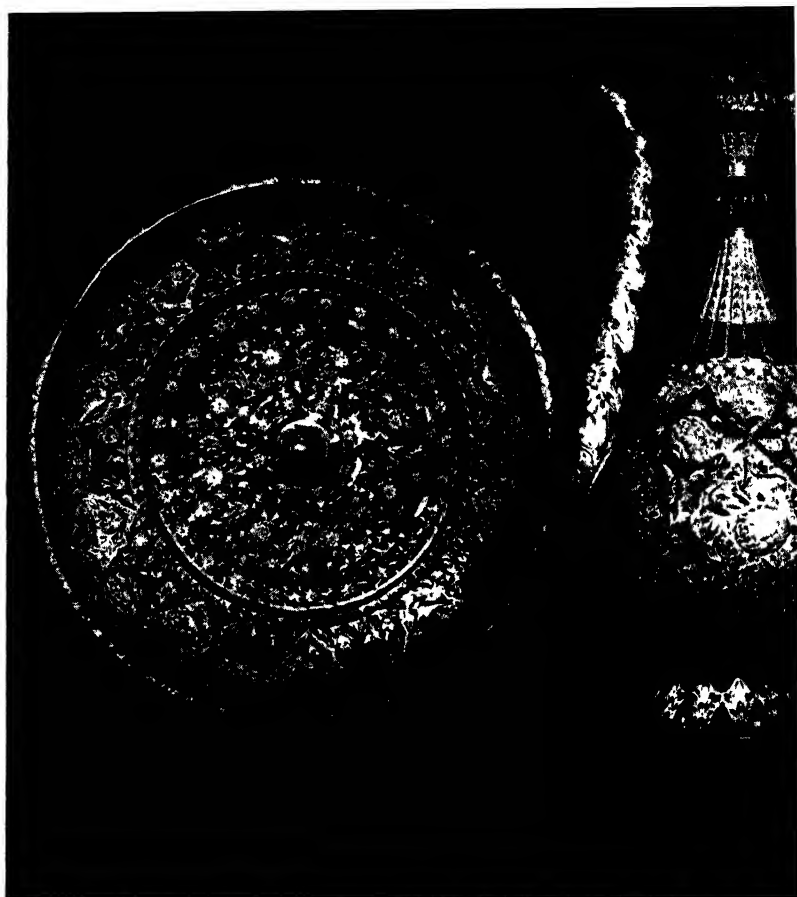
Other factors are the relative novelty of paper money in Eastern economy and the doubtful capacity of governments generally to operate a managed currency system which paper money implies. It is no reflection on the capabilities of the Iranians to suggest that note-issue theory and practice are beyond their competence. When no government has succeeded for long in managing a paper currency in the three hundred years of European experience with central banking, when questions of note issue and credit control are still among the most baffling abstrusities with which economists and statesmen grapple, it is hardly to be expected that a country like Iran should fail to appreciate its implications or to solve the problems it presents.

### *Paper Money as Facilitating Conquest*

A further factor, which the people of Iran, like the inhabitants of Europe, discovered to their sorrow, is that paper money provides an excellent pavement, and a broad highway, for the troops of an invader. Among a people accustomed to paper money, the problems of occupation an invader faces are simplified. The occupying army does not have to bring along gold or silver or commodities to finance its operations, nor is it compelled to the onerous and often hazardous task of local levy and taxation. It can, indeed, give its occupation the appearance of a boon, by lightening the tax burden and creating a sense of general prosperity. To do all this, it need only commandeer the printing presses of the national bank that emits the currency.

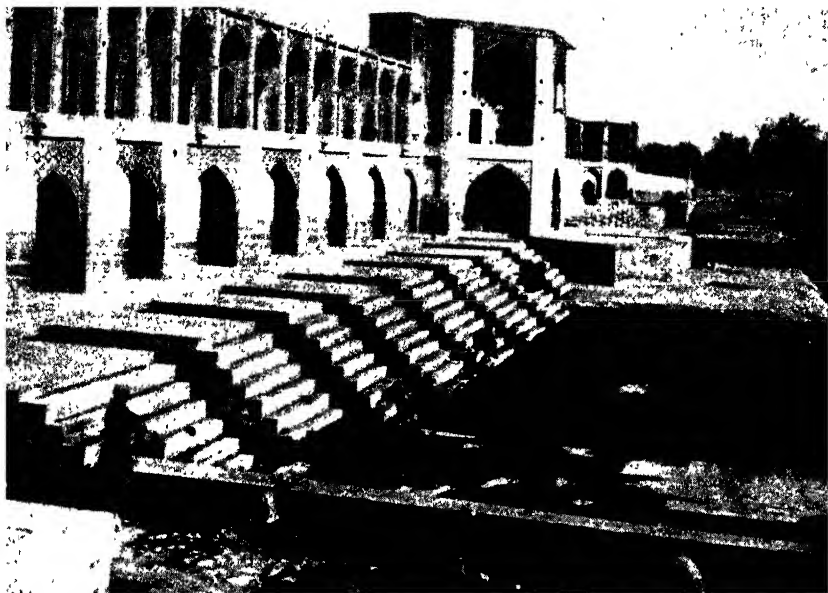
### · C. ADOPTION OF PAPER MONEY

All these considerations were overlooked or ignored by Riza Shah Pahlavi when in 1927 he obtained authorization from the Majlis to establish a national bank and in 1932 the further authorization for the bank to issue paper money. The bank



*Photo courtesy United States Army Si*

## 5. PERSIAN METAL WORK



*Photo courtesy United States Army Signal Corps*

6a. PUL-I-KHAJA BRIDGE, ISFAHAN. This bridge has footpaths on three levels, small chambers decorated with paintings, covered galleries cut through the sides of arches, and heavy foundations that serve to dam the river.

**b. SPRING PLOWING**

NAWAR SPRING, PLOWING IN HADON

*Photo by author*



so created was modeled along the best European lines; the law required that the managing director be an American<sup>9</sup> and the power of note issue was strictly limited. This institution, now named the Bank Melli, prospered from the beginning. In time it occupied a magnificent building on the Avenue Firdausi, executed in Achaemenian architectural traditions, and equipped with all the services and appointments found in the most elegant banking houses of the West: today the routine operations of the institution are punctilious; on the desk of the director stand two telephones, an interoffice communication system, and a row of push buttons; the Bank publishes a monthly statistical bulletin in Persian and in French (now English), bulkier in content than those published by most Wall Street banks; the gardens of the Bank are among the most beautiful in the city, and attract many visitors; the Bank maintains also a beautiful clubhouse for its employees, equipped with a swimming pool and gymnasium; the formalities of opening and closing the vaults, of issuing and retiring notes, are as ceremonious as those of the Federal Reserve Bank in New York.

### *Adoption of Paper Money*

The Bank regularly shows handsome profits, for it charges interest to the government on its open-account loans, and receives a commission on all foreign-exchange transactions, whether such exchange is sold by it or by its commercial rival, the British-operated Imperial Bank. Its assets are invested in the capital stock of numerous State financial institutions, such as the Agricultural Bank, the State Insurance Company, and the like. It has instituted a savings-account system which is attracting increasing amounts of deposits from small and large investors.

In the course of its first ten years, it succeeded in replacing the greater part of the silver circulation of the country with

<sup>9</sup> In the naive confidence, no doubt, that Americans knew how to manage money as they knew how to manage great factories: this was before the crisis in 1933 when every bank in the United States was closed and the wheels of all industry stopped in consequence, and when, to remedy the conditions created by the credit system, the dollar had to be debased by 40 per cent.

its notes; the silver was withdrawn from circulation and piled up in the Bank's vaults in canvas sacks as cover for the note issue. The note issue is, according to accepted banking principles, eminently sound.

Nevertheless, a few facts regarding the changes in the currency and the note issue that followed the establishment of the Bank will illustrate the process by which the poison of fiat money infects the economy of a nation and spreads through the body of the national life.

The Bank Melli was created on 5 May 1927, with a capital of 15,000,000 tomans.<sup>10</sup> The charter stipulated that the Bank could make no loan to the government, or to any bureau or agency of the government, or to any municipality, without the approval of the Majlis.

### *Expansion of Note Issue*

In 1930, the currency system, which had been based on a silver kran of 4.603392 grams .900 fine,<sup>11</sup> and which had been in effect throughout Kajar times, was abandoned in favor of a new system based on a gold rial containing .3661191 grams of fine gold, or roundly equivalent to \$.29, valuing gold at its then official American price of \$20.67 per ounce, or \$.42 valuing gold at its present American statutory price of \$35.00 an ounce.<sup>12</sup> The only coin of gold to be minted, however, was a gold pahlavi, equivalent to 20 gold rials, and struck from gold of a fineness of .900. The common medium of exchange for domestic transactions was a silver rial, containing 4.5 grams of fine silver, coined at a fineness of .900, and worth approximately \$.08 at a price of silver of \$.55 an ounce. The silver rial had only a nominal value, however, since the standard for payments was now gold.

Almost immediately, however, the world financial crisis brought a sharp change in the gold-silver ratio, which made this artificial standard unworkable. Silver prices began to decline, and from the average price of \$.536 an ounce, which had prevailed in 1929, fell to an average price of \$.311 an ounce

<sup>10</sup> A toman is the equivalent of 10 rials, and at the time had a value generally equivalent to one dollar, though this value fluctuated.

<sup>11</sup> Nine-tenths silver, one-tenth alloy.

<sup>12</sup> Act of 27 Esfand 1308 (18 March 1930).

in 1930, and to an average price of \$.292 an ounce in 1931. Accordingly, by a law passed 13 March 1932,<sup>13</sup> the standard was modified by reducing the gold rial to one-fifth its previous value, or to .07322382 grams fine gold and the silver rial from 4.5 grams fine silver to 4.14 grams fine silver. This gave the rial now the same fine content as the former kran. The fineness of the silver coin was reduced from .900 to .828, which meant, as has been noted, a corresponding corruption of the silver content in articles of silver handicraft. These values corresponded to \$.058 for the gold rial and \$.04 for the silver rial, valuing the silver at \$.30 per fine ounce.

The country was now embarked on a fictitious gold standard—fictitious from the fact that the gold rial was not coined and internal trade was based on the silver rial. This attempt brought the beginning of the complications of a managed money system, since the rial that the peasants received for their produce and gave for the sugar and tea and other articles they purchased had one value in the market and another value in the government accounts.

### *Incipient Inflation*

At the same time that this change occurred, the Bank was authorized to issue notes up to an amount of 90,000,000 rials, plus an additional 250,000,000 rials of notes of large denominations (1,000 rials). The notes were to be secured in full by an equivalent amount of gold, silver, or foreign gold exchange (deposits in banks of countries that freely redeemed notes or deposits in gold), but a mystifying provision of the law was that the reserve 'might be in circulation.' Moreover, because of the monetary crisis, redemption of notes in gold was suspended, although the notes remained redeemable in silver. As the silver circulation of the country was estimated at the time to be approximately 550,000,000 krans, the effect of this was to increase the total purchasing media of the country by around 60 per cent.

Subsequently in the same year,<sup>14</sup> the introduction of the new coins was officially deferred owing to the inability of the government to mint the silver.

<sup>13</sup> Act of 22 Esfand 1310.

<sup>14</sup> Act of 5 Mehr 1311 (27 September 1932).

Two years later, on 11 September 1934, a further increase in the note issue was authorized, to bring the total authorization to 800,000,000 rials,<sup>15</sup> and the reserve requirement was reduced to 60 per cent in gold and silver, which reserve, however, had to be maintained in the vaults of the Bank.

These new increases in the note issue failed to meet the demand for currency, and on 8 November 1936,<sup>16</sup> a further note issue was authorized, bringing the total to 1,176,163,600 rials. The steady increase in paper money circulation may be visualized as follows:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Notes in Circulation</i>
20 March 1933	Rs. 194,999,700
20 March 1934	245,128,500
20 March 1935	421,653,500
19 March 1936	593,721,755
20 March 1937	813,186,220
20 March 1938	849,708,385
21 March 1939	999,819,620

Source: *Lois et decrets monétaires et bancaires*, Department of Economic and Financial Studies, Teheran, 1937; and *Annual Reports* of Bank Melli.

By the time World War II broke out, the country had generally become accustomed to paper money, and paper money was the common medium of exchange, except among the tribes and in isolated villages. The greater part of the silver stock had now been concentrated in the vaults of the Bank, as reserve against the note issue, and silver coins had ceased to be a source of supply for the silversmith.

The subsequent deterioration of the economy, and the effects upon the livelihood and standard of living of the people, as a result of paper-money issues, and the manner in which paper-money issue was employed by occupying armies, belongs to the story of the Russo-British occupation that began in 1941 and continued until 1946, and will be told as part of that record.

<sup>15</sup> Act of 20 Sharivar 1313.

<sup>16</sup> Act of 17 Aban 1315.

## VI

### DECAY OF THE REGIME

TOWARDS the end of his reign, Riza Shah Pahlavi, like the dictators that had arisen in Europe, became more autocratic, more capricious, more concerned with enlarging his personal fortune and securing his dynasty, less and less concerned with the essential welfare of his people. The movement towards political democracy, which had begun in 1906 with the establishment of the Constitution, and which for all the vicissitudes to which the process has subjected the Iranian people has been the most promising development in modern Iranian history, was almost fatally interrupted; there occurred a decay of public morals and standards of official conduct from which the country has not yet recovered and may not recover for a generation.

#### *Absolutist Tendencies*

Following the example of the regimes in Italy, Germany, and Russia, the Shah had created a secret police for political security; it was not long until, like all of these organizations, it became a terror to both the righteous and the unrighteous: free speech disappeared; the Majlis became a rubber stamp to authenticate the Shah's decrees.

Until 1933, the Shah's popularity had been unquestioned. Until then he had acted generally in accordance with the popular will and with the advice and consent of his ministers. The creation of various State enterprises had, however, presented too many opportunities for profit for those in the royal favor to miss—it became worth a fortune to be in the inner circle and to enjoy the Shah's confidence.

#### *Financial Scandals*

The minister of court controlled the audiences with the Shah. The incumbent of this office was one Abol Hossein Khan



Teymourtashe: it became necessary to win this minister's favor, by one means or another, to see the Shah. Teymourtashe began to grow wealthy. For some time, it seems, the Shah was unaware of the power that was being insensibly drawn from him and vested in Teymourtashe; when he did discover the fact, great was his vengeance.

What brought matters to a head was the affair of the opium monopoly. In 1928, the government had created a State monopoly for trade in opium, and in 1930 it gave the monopoly of opium exports to one Hadj Mirza Habibollah Amine, head of a wealthy trading firm of Isfahan, who was authorized to create a company to exploit the concession. The Shah became a shareholder of the company, as did numerous members of the royal court.

Amine soon discovered that his supposedly profitable concession was a liability. As it was generally assumed that he could now afford to dispense gratuities freely, he became the prey of various extortioners in royal favor. Thus, he was required to contribute 40,000 tomans (\$10,000) towards the illumination of Isfahan on the occasion of a royal visit to that city. Teymourtashe, being required to accompany the royal princes to Europe on the occasion of their entering school there, applied to Amine for a sum to cover the expense to which he might be placed, and obtained £9,000 and 200,000 rials, or around \$60,000 altogether. Amine concluded that the cost of his monopoly was too high, and gave it up in 1933. At the same time Teymourtashe was officially charged with bribery. He was sentenced to prison but died shortly afterward of what is commonly understood to have been poison or strangling.

### *Reign of Terror*

The Shah now grew morose, aloof, and extremely suspicious. A little later Davar, the able and honest minister of justice, who had been largely responsible for the judicial reforms, fell into displeasure, and in order to avoid public disgrace, committed suicide by an overdose of opium.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not everyone fell into disfavor, of course, and not everyone became tainted with corruption. Among those who escaped both, may be mentioned Taqizadeh, minister of finance, who had strongly opposed Tey-

The Shah now began to acquire estates wherever his fancy pleased, but chiefly in Mazanderan, his native province. Land-owners whose properties he admired found it convenient to offer them as a present. The secret police became more and more oppressive, and a reign of terror developed which, according to observers, was little less sanguine than Hitler's. Formerly, persons incurring royal displeasure were given the appearance of a trial on some trumped-up charge; later, trials were dispensed with and clandestine executions became common. The highly respected Arbab Kai Khosroe, head of the Parsee community and a member of the Majlis, was thrown into prison, and, as was afterward testified during the trial of Mukhtarri, chief of police in Teheran, was put to death by the refined process of introducing air bubbles into his veins. The doctor who acted as executioner, testimony at Mukhtarri's trial brought out, executed some two hundred fifty persons by such means or by other medical malpractice.

Under the influence of the Shah's example, standards of public morality, which had experienced some purification and elevation during the early years of the regime, suffered a terrible deterioration. Corruption became general. The ancient system of *mudakhil*, previously described, became more vicious: functionaries, from ministers to clerks and the lowest *farash*, demanded a commission, perquisite, or advantage from their official acts. This decay of public administration remains a principal cause of government enfeeblement today, and the main retardent to national revival.

mourtashe, and who is now ambassador to Great Britain; Hussein Ala, head of the national bank and now the exceedingly respected and able ambassador to the United States; Hussein Pirnia; Ali Akbar Hekmat; Allahyar Saleh; Dr. Shafaq, all of whom have since rendered notable service to their country in various capacities. The list could be greatly extended.

## VII

### THE RUSSO-BRITISH OCCUPATION

#### A. THE OCCUPATION

THE APPARENTLY self-denying treaty of 26 February 1921, which Soviet Russia had negotiated with the government of Iran, had shrewdly provided that in case Russia were threatened by a third power, by way of Iran, it might send its troops into Iran to remove such threat.

In 1941, the Soviet government implemented this provision. During the previous decade, a good many German firms had entered business in Iran, as railway and electrical contractors and merchants, and possibly a thousand Germans capable of bearing arms were in Iran at this time. The Soviet government regarded these Germans as a menace, and began to make representations to the government of Iran, asserting that persons of German nationality or under German influence were storing munitions of war along the frontier and were organizing terrorists in Azerbaijan.

The British joined in these representations and in the second week of August 1941, sent 'friendly' warnings to the government.

#### *Russo-British Invasion*

A nation that had for a hundred years suffered continual interference in its affairs from a powerful neighbor might naturally view with satisfaction the humiliation of that neighbor and the curtailment of its military power, and the sympathies of the Iranian people were undoubtedly with Germany. The success of German arms had at that time been nowhere seriously challenged, and German armies were then marching towards the heart of Russia. Under these circumstances, Riza Shah Pahlavi replied in uncompromising terms to the Russian and British representations.

On 16 August 1941, a joint Russo-British note was addressed

to the Iranian government, as a result of which the Shah reluctantly expelled a few Germans, but announced that any Russian or British interference would be resisted. Since this reply was not regarded as satisfactory, Russia and Britain, on 25 August 1941, sent forces into Iran, the Russians from the north, the British from the south.

The government was in no position to resist invasion. Absolutism had gone into tyranny and tyranny had produced its usual harvest of fear, both on the part of the ruler and ruled: the Shah had found it necessary to keep the greater part of the army around Teheran, rather than on the frontier. Whether the army, had it been on the frontier, would have had the will to fight is doubtful. In any case, on 26 August, the Shah sued for peace, and a new government took office next day. On 28 August firing ceased, though not before the British had blown the puny Iranian navy out of the water and the Russians had given the city of Tabriz a monitory bombing in which, according to reports, several thousand innocent civilians were killed or wounded.

#### *Abdication of Riza Shah Pahlavi*

On 9 September 1941, an agreement was signed which put the greater part of the country under Russian and British control. On 16 September, Riza Shah Pahlavi, in order to avoid his deposition and to save the throne for his dynasty, abdicated in favor of his 22-year-old son, Mohammad Shahpur, and on 20 September, the Constitution was restored to vigor by the formal proclamation by the new Shah of a constitutional monarchy. Riza Shah Pahlavi retired to Johannesburg, South Africa, where he died on 26 July 1944, at the age of 66.

On 29 January 1942, a formal treaty was entered into by the three governments, by which the occupation was given a juridical status. This treaty in its opening article reaffirmed the independence of the country, and in the succeeding articles established an alliance among the three powers, nominally for the defense of Iran, but in fact to further the prosecution of war against Germany. The Iranian government was not required to assist the other two powers, however, other than by allowing them to occupy such parts of the country as they pleased, and to place at their disposal any and all facilities

necessary for the movement of their troops, including censorship of communications. It was stipulated that the presence of the troops of these powers did not constitute military occupation, and that the internal administration of the country would be subject to a minimum of interference. Finally, the two powers agreed to 'safeguard the economic existence of the Iranian people' and to withdraw their forces 'not later than six months after all hostilities between the Allied Powers and Germany and her associates have been suspended by the conclusion of an armistice or armistices, or on the conclusion of peace between them, whichever date is the earlier.'

### *Appropriation of National Resources*

The several agencies that Riza Shah Pahlavi had created to assure his country's independence and security were now seized by the occupying powers and employed, if not for an opposite purpose, at least with an opposite effect. Promptly the splendid railway and highway systems were devoted to the transport of war supplies from the Persian Gulf north to the armies defending the Caucasus. All but an insignificant part of the automotive transport of the country was likewise impressed into this service. The people who had crowded into the cities during the days of the great prosperity, drawn by the opportunities for work in the factories and lured by the parks and public buildings built for their pleasure, now began to feel the effects of hunger. The trucks were busy carrying war materials to Russia; camels, too slow and too feeble for such war service, might have brought in food, but they had all but disappeared, the Shah having banned them because they obstructed the roads and seemed a sign of backwardness. In Teheran in the winter of 1942-3, the Hotel Derbend, the magnificent resort hotel which Irantour, the State tourist company, had erected in near-by Shimran, had nothing better to serve its guests than spinach and eggs and camel thorn, while in Ahwaz, for example, 600 miles distant by rail, dates were rotting in the palm groves.

What the people needed, of course, was bread, but the chief source of wheat for bread was in the northwestern provinces, which were under Russian occupation, and this wheat, as well as the rice of Mazanderan, was being taken to Russia. During

the winter of 1941-2, the British brought in 93,000 tons of wheat, part of which was supplied by the United States. The Russians now grudgingly agreed to bring in a similar quantity, though no positive evidence exists that this promise was ever fulfilled.

### *American Occupation of Railways*

On 2 May 1942, the United States entered into an agreement with Iran whereby the American government agreed to supply Iran with goods and materials under the Lend-Lease Act, and later in 1942, in furtherance of its undertaking to supply Russia with war materials, under the Lend-Lease Act, established a military mission in Iran. Early in 1943, there was begun the organization of the Persian Gulf Service Command, a noncombat force composed primarily of transportation technicians. This force, which ultimately numbered from 20,000 to 30,000 persons, took over the task of operating the port facilities at Khorramshahr and Bandar Shahpur, in the south, together with the railways and the principal highways. The port installations were practically rebuilt, the railway line was strengthened and improved, and a great amount of rolling stock was added to the equipment. The highways were also improved to handle the huge volume of goods shipped north by truck convoy.

The American force, though confined to the railway line and the highways, and though unarmed in a military sense, was nevertheless in Iran in an anomalous position, since it came neither as a hostile occupying force, nor by right of any treaty or other agreement; nor was this status ever subsequently regularized by agreement or treaty, as was the Russian and British occupation.

By means of the railway and highway systems, which Riza Shah Pahlavi had built to serve his country, some 5,000,000 tons of war material were delivered to Russia, with the result that Russia was victorious over its enemies, and at the end of the war was still strong enough to continue its occupation of northern Iran in defiance of the expressed opinion of the rest of the world; and when it nominally evacuated this area, it was able to leave behind quantities of American tanks, trucks, and other war material in the hands of 'insurgents' who con-

tinued to defy the Iranian government and demand their independence of the rest of the country.

#### B. FINANCING THE OCCUPATION

Likewise, by means of the national bank and the institution of an Iranian paper currency, the major occupying powers were able to finance their military expenditures in Iran without the necessity of importing specie or other valuables, as had been the case during the previous occupation of the country by Russia and Great Britain in World War I. Had metal money been the standard of payment in Iran, and had the people been unaccustomed to any other, one or other of the following methods would have had to be followed: (a) to require the Iranian government to deliver such money from its own treasury or tax receipts, a process that would soon have exhausted the treasury without meeting the total requirements of the occupying powers; (b) to take over the administration of the country and make levies on the population, a course that would have required a full-scale occupation with all its attendant difficulties; (c) to barter for goods and services by bringing in goods; or (d) to import specie, that is, gold or silver, either to be minted into coin of the realm or to be exchanged for goods and services at its bullion value.

None of these alternatives was necessary. The legal tender in Iran was now the paper rial, and as by law the government held a monopoly of foreign exchange, it was not necessary to go into the market to purchase exchange.

From the beginning of the war, the value of the rial had been rising in relation to sterling, which dropped from 80 rials to the pound in 1939 to 65 rials to the pound before the occupation. But now the rial took a precipitate drop, to 142 to the pound. In order to protect the Iranian currency from a further depreciation, as well as to assure itself of a supply of rials, the British government negotiated a financial agreement with Iran, which was signed on 26 May 1942, which fixed the rial-sterling rate at 128.30 rials to the pound, and obligated the Iranian government to deliver unlimited quantities of rials at this rate. The agreement also fixed a corresponding rate for dollars of 32.32½ rials to the dollar (at the cross rate

of \$4 to the pound which had been set by the American and British governments). The sterling delivered for rials consisted of sterling credits set up in favor of the Iranian government (i.e. the Bank Melli) in the Bank of England, which credits could be drawn upon only for the purchases of goods in the 'Sterling Area' (that is, areas in which the value of sterling could be fixed by fiat), but could be used to purchase goods in North America after the Iranian government had exhausted all its supply of dollars. On its part, the British government agreed to convert 40 per cent of the sterling credits into gold at the official parity, which gold should, however, be kept either in Canada or South Africa.

### *Financial Agreements*

Subsequently, on 5 January 1943, the agreement was modified at the insistence of the Iranian government, the British government agreeing to convert 60 per cent of the sterling balances into gold; subsequently, also, the transfer to Teheran of the gold portion of the credits was provided.

The fixing of the sterling-rial rate at 128.30 rials to the pound was an advantage at first to the British and American governments, but as a device to stabilize the cost of purchases it failed like most attempts at managed currency. While the price of rials was now fixed, the price of things that rials purchased was not fixed, and despite various attempts to control the price level by price fixing and rationing, the cost of occupation continued to mount with the mounting inflation.

The United States government also entered into negotiations for a financial agreement, as well as an agreement that would regularize the presence of American troops in the country, but the negotiations were never consummated. The American government, however, continued to sell dollars at the equivalent of the British rate for sterling, that is, 32 rials to the dollar, and in accordance with the Gold Reserve Act of 1934, made these dollars fully convertible into gold at the statutory rate of \$35 an ounce.

When I examined this situation on my arrival in Teheran in January 1943,<sup>1</sup> I recommended that the American and

<sup>1</sup> As Treasurer General of Iran, by Parliamentary appointment (Act of 8 Dey 1321).



British governments sell gold directly in the market, and thereby relieve the strain on the printing press; not only would the process assist in stemming the inflation but it would reduce the costs of the occupation, since the bazaar price of gold was then \$70 to \$80 an ounce, as against the \$35 an ounce, or its equivalent, at which dollars and pounds sterling were being sold to the Bank Melli. The British government was hesitant for fear the operation might set a precedent in other parts of the East and involve the British Treasury in gold commitments beyond its capacity. The American Treasury Department, which held abundance of gold, timidly followed the British lead, but offered to deliver gold to the Iranian government in lieu of dollar exchange. This offer was promptly accepted; I drafted a ministerial order for the Bank Melli to purchase a half ton of gold (\$500,000) for immediate shipment by air. The gold, in small bars packed in sawdust-filled kegs, was delivered by the army air service within a fortnight, and promptly put on sale for the Iranian government account. The operation realized a profit of approximately 100 per cent for the government, and was instituted as a regular practice. Eventually, in March 1944, but too late to curb the inflation, the American and British governments concluded to follow the example set, and from then on until the end of the war the operations of these two powers in Iran were financed largely by open-market gold sales, made through the intermediary of and in account with the Bank Melli.<sup>2</sup>

On 10 March 1943, the Soviet government negotiated a financial agreement with Iran, following closely the British agreement, but with certain modifications of a peculiar nature. Since the Soviet government, as a result of its totalitarian economy, had no money with a recognized international value, the Russo-Iranian Agreement employed dollars as the unit of account, and the Soviet government agreed, in exchange for the rials received, to set up dollar balances in Moscow in favor

<sup>2</sup> Total U. S. disbursements in Iran from 1 July 1940, through 31 December 1945, amounted to \$118,832,366 gross, and to \$55,452,893 net. Sales of gold against rials (open-market sales) amounted to \$5,595,232. In addition, sales of gold were made to the Bank Melli, either for resale or to add to the note reserve, of \$11,499,874.

of the Iranian government. Such dollar balances were obviously bookkeeping entries.

Following meticulously the terms of the Irano-British Agreement, the Russo-Iranian Agreement further provided that 60 per cent of the credits so established should be convertible into gold, and that the gold would be transported on request to the Iranian border, providing, however, that the cost of insurance were borne by the Iranian government. The insurance rate was not specified. The Agreement also provided that the dollar credits might be used for the purchase of American goods, should the Iranian government's supply of dollars from other sources be exhausted. The final disposal of the dollar balances was to be determined at the termination of the Agreement, which would occur at the same time as the termination of the Agreement of 29 January 1942, governing the occupation.

Subsequently, the Soviet government notified the Iranian government that it would require 80,000,000 rials monthly for its occupation expenses. British occupation costs began to run at the rate of 300,000,000 rials monthly and American occupation costs substantially more.

### C. THE SPREAD OF INFLATION

The Bank Melli had begun to issue and deliver bank notes to the occupying powers,<sup>8</sup> and since the notes, once issued, remained in circulation (instead of returning to the Bank as customers' deposits), the Bank was continually under the necessity of issuing fresh quantities of notes. Moreover, the government, restricted in exercising its sovereign powers, particularly in the areas under Russian occupation, and unable to collect the taxes due, and faced also with mounting costs of administration, was compelled to borrow from the Bank to meet its budgetary needs. During the year 1942-3, tax collections dropped by around 670,000,000 rials, while expenditures increased by some 590,000,000 rials, compared with the year earlier. By 5 January 1943, the floating debt amounted to 3,400,000,000 rials, compared with 2,181,000,000 rials at the beginning of 1942.

<sup>8</sup> The notes were printed in England, and delivered by air.

*Increase in Note Issue*

The budgetary deficit, like the expenditures of the occupying powers, was financed by the Bank, by an increase of the note issue. The circulation, which stood at 1,550,000,000 rials on 21 August 1941, just before the occupation, mounted to more than 2 billion rials within a year. The subsequent increases may be shown as follows:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Total Circulation</i>	<i>Net Circulation *</i>
20 August 1941	Rs. 1,550,000,000	Rs. 1,377,101,665
22 October 1942	3,000,000,000	2,553,630,415
22 November 1943	5,998,625,600	5,024,442,440
21 November 1944	7,580,750,600	6,416,233,965
20 March 1945	7,662,000,000	6,662,783,500

\* Notes not held by National Bank.

Along with this increase of notes went an increase in living costs, as follows, based on the year ending 21 March 1937 as 100.

<i>Month and Year</i>	<i>Cost of Living Index</i>
August-September 1941	154.1
August-September 1942	242.8
August-September 1943	392.1
November-December 1943	542.4
March-April 1944	910.
August-September 1944	993.
November-December 1944	1,076.
March-April 1945	1,108.

Source: Bulletins of Bank Melli Iran.

A principal effect of these emissions of paper money and the rise of prices was to induce a loss of confidence in the money and the government that issued it, and to add to the usual inducements to hoarding. Silver had long disappeared from circulation, and in the absence of silver or gold any commodity that could be stored was held off the market. This was chiefly wheat, which caused the food situation in the cities to grow increasingly serious.

The British government, more concerned than the Russian in the maintenance of the integrity of the Iranian government,

and the independence of the people, early began to take such measures as it could to relieve the situation. Subsequently, on 4 December 1942, a Food Agreement was signed between the United States and Great Britain, on the one hand, and the Iranian government, on the other, by which the two powers agreed to make up any deficiency in the food supplies of the country resulting from the occupation.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the 93,000 tons of wheat which had been brought in during 1941-2, a further 30,000 tons of wheat and 24,000 tons of barley were promised for the ensuing year.

The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, in order to assist the government in meeting the budgetary deficit, advanced several million pounds sterling against future royalties. During the summer of 1942, the British minister suggested that American financial advisers be engaged, in the hope that their presence might be of some assistance in maintaining public confidence, and that possibly they might devise some solution to the problem short of evacuation. It was a forlorn hope, of course, for chaos was implicit in a situation in which a country was visited with the troops of three foreign powers, two of which had been traditionally jealous of each other, the third of which, being neither an invader nor a visitor, and whose forces were neither troops nor civilians, was in the country under no law of war or peace, assuming none of the responsibilities, though enjoying most of the privileges, of a conqueror. In such a situation, order could be brought about only by a radical change in fundamentals.

#### D. AMERICAN FINANCIAL MISSION

To assist in solving the growing problems in the administration and finances of the country, the government requested the aid of foreign advisers. The United Kingdom Commercial Company (a British government agency which handled British transport and commercial transactions in Iran) lent advisers and gave assistance in the organization of an Iranian state transportation agency directed towards mobilizing all carrying facilities. Major General Clarence Ridley and a staff of

<sup>4</sup> This deficiency arose largely from seizures of grain and livestock by the Soviet occupation forces.

officers were sent by the United States Army to advise in the reorganization of the quartermaster and supply departments of the Iranian army. Another group of officers, headed by Colonel H. Norman Schwarzkopf, became advisers to the Iranian *Amniyeh*, or gendarmerie (internal police). Colonel L. Steven Timmerman was engaged as adviser to the Teheran police administration; J. P. Sheridan as adviser to a new food ministry, set up to deal with food supply and distribution; Dr. Luther Winsor, an expert on irrigation, as adviser to the ministry of agriculture; and Lt. Col. Alexander Neuwirth from the United States Army as adviser to the ministry of health.

In addition to these, a group of financial and fiscal advisers were engaged for service in the ministry of finance. The difference between this group, known as the American Financial Mission, and the other advisers, lay generally in the fact that they were conferred, either by law or by the nature of their appointment, with considerable executive powers in addition to their advisory functions. A. C. Millspaugh, who had previously (1922-7) served the government as administrator general of the finances, was, by act of the Majlis,<sup>5</sup> again appointed to the same post, and was vested with powers even broader than those he had previously exercised during his earlier service with the government.

By similar acts of the Majlis, Richard Bonneville was appointed chief finance inspector, Howard Shambarger as accountant general, Harold Gresham as director of customs, James G. Robinson as director of internal taxation, Paul Atkins as economic expert, and I as treasurer general.<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Bonneville did not take up his appointment. It soon became apparent to me that, in view of the policies and procedures being followed by the administrator general of the finances, I could render no effective service as treasurer general, and I resigned after six months. Messrs. Robinson, Shambarger, and Atkins likewise all withdrew before the end of the year.

<sup>5</sup> Act of 21 Aban 1321 (12 November 1942).

<sup>6</sup> All these posts, with the exception of that of economic expert, were statutory positions in the ministry of finance, with powers and duties generally defined by Iranian law.

The mission arrived in January 1943. In his first monthly report the administrator general of the finances summarized the economic condition of the country in the following words:

The economic situation at the present moment is of the gravest character. The various factors in the situation are complicated and interwoven, and because some of the most important of these factors are beyond the control of the Iranian Government the task of coping with the situation is one of extreme difficulty. The most serious and urgent aspects of the economic situation should be considered under two heads: (1) the food problem and (2) the rising cost of living.<sup>7</sup>

To meet this situation, the mission proposed the following measures:

1. Price-fixing and rationing of essential commodities.
2. Revision of the income-tax law, so as to draw off as much as possible of the excess purchasing power and cover the Government deficit.
3. Reduction of the Government budget and of Government borrowing from the National Bank.
4. An internal Treasury loan, intended to provide a means of saving and also draw off a portion of the excess purchasing power.
5. Increase of agricultural and industrial production within the country.
6. The increase of imports to meet Iran's need for essential goods, so far as such action may be possible in view of the shortage of shipping.
7. Better means of distributing imported goods.
8. Sale of Government properties.
9. Bringing gold into the country and better means of handling exchange transactions.
10. Sale of silver for rials.
11. Selling of obsolete coins at the Mint.
12. Minting of token money.<sup>8</sup>

The administrator general of the finances concluded that even more extensive powers than had originally been conferred on him were necessary in order to deal with the crisis. These were granted. He was authorized also to engage a staff

<sup>7</sup> *Monthly Report of the Administrator General of the Finances, Bahman 1321.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

of sixty Americans, besides Iranian assistants. He now came to the conclusion that only dictatorial powers would save the situation, and in a letter to the American ambassador wrote: 'Although the actual status of the mission may be camouflaged to some extent to save Iranian feelings, the mission will have to be in effect the government of the country in financial, economic, and social affairs.'<sup>9</sup> This was a view that the American government could not properly support in the light of its known position, and one that the Iranian government could not accept with dignity. Relations between the administrator general and the government became less and less cordial, and when the former finally attempted to assert authority over the powerful Bank Melli, its managing director challenged him. The question now came to the Majlis for determination. Opposition to the administrator general and the policies he had been following had been growing. The Majlis resolved the question in favor of the Bank manager, and at the same time repealed a number of the powers that had been conferred upon the administrator general. Millspaugh thereupon, in February 1945, resigned his post. He went to England, where he stayed until the end of the year, returning to the United States in time to issue a statement, on the eve of the meeting of the Security Council to consider the Soviet-Iranian question, sharply criticizing the Iranian government as incapable of self-government, and proposing in effect a joint Russo-British-American protectorate.

#### E. RUSSIAN OCCUPATION POLICY

British policy, as stated, was directed towards the maintenance of the integrity of Iran, so far as was consistent with the military purpose of the occupation. This was a policy in accord with British long-range interests in the Middle East, which were to keep a buffer state between Russia and the Persian Gulf. After the British victory at El Alamein in October 1942, and the German defeat at Stalingrad in January 1943, the Middle East was relatively secure, and military reasons for British occupation ceased to exist. The only interest

<sup>9</sup> *Americans in Persia*, p. 220.

of the Western Allies in Iran was the usefulness of the country as a corridor for shipments of war material to Russia. This interest could have been served without a military occupation. There is reason to believe that Great Britain would gladly have withdrawn its troops at this time, which could have been used to greater effectiveness in the European theater, but Soviet Russia had other designs, and the British were required to remain as a counter-check upon their ally.

In the northern areas, under Russian occupation, no effort was made to assist the Iranian government in maintaining its sovereignty. In the words of an official observation made in January 1942, 'On the one hand the Russians treat the people individually in a considerate and kindly manner, and on the other have utter contempt for the government and social system.'

Some instances of the manner in which the Russians ignored and flouted the Iranian government, and arranged affairs so as to reduce it to further impotence may be cited:

(1) While the Iranian customs in the south were maintained, and American and British imports (except goods en route to Russia) paid the stated customs tariff, the customs frontier in the north was ignored, and the Russians brought in goods for sale in Iran without the formality of declaring their value. They also declined to pay the internal road tax, or the railway tariff for the transportation of war material to Russia. The result was that the Americans and British had to pay these charges. It should be explained in this connection that while the Americans operated the railways, the legal control remained in the Iranian State Railways, and the stated tariff was paid to the State Railways which in turn paid the costs of operation.

(2) The Soviet government, invoking the terms of the Agreement of 29 January 1942, required the Iranian government to provide facilities of various sorts, and to defray the expense of upkeep of these facilities, while, contrariwise, requiring the Iranian government to pay the cost of any facilities or goods made available by the Russians for the maintenance of Iranian security and economy. Thus, the State munitions factory was taken over and devoted to manufacturing machine guns and ammunition for the Soviet army. All the operating expenses of



this factory continued to be borne by the Iranian government, which was compelled to include in its budget sums for this purpose. A similar requirement was made in regard to the canning factories turned over to the Soviet authorities.

(3) The Caspian fisheries were operated at a loss owing to the refusal of the Soviet government to fix a price at which the products were sold.

(4) The Soviet government took the output of the copper mines without reimbursement.

(5) The Soviet government required the Iranian government to advance (up to June 1943) 22,500,000 rials to rebuild roads used by the Soviet forces, 88,200,000 rials for maintaining the portion of the railway operated by Soviet forces, 80,000,000 rials for maintenance of roads used by Soviet forces, 5,500,000 rials to maintain the port facilities at Bandar Pahlavi, operated by Soviet forces, 1,850,000 rials to maintain the port of Noo Shahr.

(6) The Soviet authorities took the product of the State military shoe factory, at a time when Iran was obtaining shoes for its own army from the United States under the Lend-Lease Agreement.

(7) The Soviet authorities took the greater part of the rice crop in Mazanderan and Gilan, drove out 150,000 sheep and goats, but imported a little wheat, which it sold for cash. At the same time, it required the Iranian Agricultural Bank at Shahrud to advance 10,000,000 rials for the harvest and purchase of wheat, which wheat it took out of the country.

American forces evacuated Iran at the end of 1945, and early in 1946 the United States negotiated an agreement with the Iranian government in settlement of the accounts. While under the Lend-Lease Agreement with Soviet Russia goods were to be delivered to Russia at American ports, and the cost of shipment was to be borne by the Soviet government, the United States government, taking the realistic view that the Iranian government would never collect the railway tolls from Russia, paid them instead. Installations, equipment, and surplus property left in Iran were valued (at cost to the United States) at \$60,776,747. A good deal of this property, such as locomotives and cars, as well as other supplies, were subsequently removed and sold to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilita-

tion Administration and others. The balance was disposed of to the Iranian government for \$27,000,000, of which \$11,000,000 was paid in cash from dollar balances in the United States, and the remainder in rials which, under the Agreement, were required to be spent gradually. The transaction, which was negotiated by Colonel John B. Stetson, was one not disadvantageous to the American government.

The British evacuated before 2 March 1946, which was the date of termination of the Agreement of 29 January 1942, being six months after the signing of the instrument of surrender by the Japanese. The Russians, however, did not leave the country, as promised. The situation this created is left for discussion in a later chapter.



**PART FOUR**  
**IRAN TODAY**



## I

### LIVELIHOOD

#### A. CONDITION OF COUNTRY AT END OF WORLD WAR II

THE END of World War II left Iran in a condition of monetary inflation which had lifted the general cost of living to ten times the average for the year 1936-7. The poor had grown poorer, for wages had not kept abreast of rising prices; speculators and traders had grown rich, and many of them had transferred themselves and their gains to Cairo, England, and the United States, where they hoped to find more security for both life and property than existed in Iran. The government budget was unbalanced, a mass of floating debt had accumulated, and the internal administration had deteriorated. As of 20 March 1945, the government owed the Bank Melli a total of 4,407,370,271 rials (approximately \$132,000,000) of which 1,400,000,000 rials had been funded as the unredeemable portion of the note issue.

#### *Financial Position*

On the hopeful side, however, the country emerged from the war with no foreign obligations and with substantial balances to its credit abroad.

The 60 per cent of the sterling credits, which had been set aside in gold in South Africa were now transferred to Iran. A substantial part of the dollar credits still held were also taken in gold and transported to Iran as note reserve. All this gold was obtained at the American statutory rate (and its English equivalent) of \$35 an ounce, which compared with an open-market rate in Iran that ran as high as \$70 to \$80 an ounce at the rate that had been fixed for the rial. The effect of this was that despite an increase in the note circulation to 7,762,000,000 rials as of 20 March 1945, the Bank held 113,980,474 grams of gold of a current value of \$128,256,520, representing 53.57 per cent of the note issue; in addition, silver was

held to the extent of 786,254,436 grams standard, worth approximately \$12,500,000 at \$.50 per ounce, and constituting 4.14 per cent of the issue. By all standard banking practices, this represents a high reserve for the note issue, and in the view of the Bank itself:

. . . the use of the word 'inflation' with regard to Iranian currency is not justifiable and in view of the unfavorable psychological effect which it has on the people, it is hoped that both official authorities and private individuals will refrain from using it in connection with the country's currency.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, on 18 November 1943, the government began anew the issue of silver coins, of 1-, 2- and 5-rial denomination. These coins were substantially reduced in weight and fineness from the standards set when the rial was introduced, the new rial piece now consisting of .96 grams of fine silver, compared with 4.14 grams originally, and the fineness was reduced from .828 to .600, which was in effect creating a coin not silver but almost half base metal.

### *Oil Resources*

More important than the yellow gold in the bank vaults is the black gold of the oil fields. Here is an immense and spectacular resource the value of which was not impaired, but rather increased by war. The refineries at Abadan and Kermanshah were enlarged, and oil is at present flowing in greater quantities than ever before, carrying with it a steadily increasing stream of royalty revenue to the government. Production is now running at around 120 million barrels annually, with the royalties yielding as a fixed minimum £4,000,000, or approximately 512,000,000 rials, annually. Immense oil reserves still remain to be developed, both in the north and in the south, and if the government is able to obtain the same terms for their development as it now enjoys from the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, these reserves will constitute an important means of improving the national well-being.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Bank Melli for the year 1322* (22 March 1943-20 March 1944). Teheran. The ratio of 53.57 per cent gold was obtained of course, by a revaluation of the gold at a higher rate; i.e. a devaluation of the rial from its former equivalent of .07322 grams fine gold to .027411 grams fine gold, or to about 37 per cent of its former value.

Aside from the revenue it provides, the oil affords a means of carrying forward the program of industrialization which as yet has been attained only to an insignificant extent. Of current oil production, about 5 per cent is used in Iran. Besides the oil, gas is produced, but cannot be exported, and sound economy would dictate its greater utilization locally. While as much gas is conserved as possible, and is employed in repressuring wells, enormous quantities are allowed to escape: the flames from their combustion illuminate the desolate Bakhtiari hills and at night give the landscape an appearance suggestive of Dante's Inferno.

### *Agriculture and Crafts*

Agriculture, grazing, and handicraft, upon which the livelihood of some 90 per cent of the population still depends, had further deteriorated as a result of the war, government policy, and the impact of foreign industrialism. During the latter years of Riza Shah Pahlavi's reign, the tax on agricultural produce, which had been abolished on the recommendation of A. C. Millspaugh in favor of a tax on the land, was reimposed. The effect of this had been again to place the incidence of taxation upon the peasant rather than upon the landowner. In addition, the price of sugar, tea, and matches had been increased by the State monopolies on these articles. Moreover, Riza Shah Pahlavi, following a policy of statecraft as old as the Romans, of making bread cheap in the cities, had kept the price of wheat low, with the practical result of reducing the yield; wherever the opium poppy could be grown it replaced wheat as an article of commerce.

The war effected a further decline in agriculture, particularly in the fertile north. The production of dried fruits is today about half of the prewar normal, due to the indiscriminate cutting down of orchards by the Russians for firewood.

Fortunately, towards the end of Riza Shah Pahlavi's regime, some recognition had been given to the agricultural problem, and certain efforts were made to meet it: an agricultural school was established; an agricultural loan bank was created to assist small landowners in purchasing and improving their properties; the sale of State domain to the peasants was begun; State-fostered locust-control measures were undertaken; sev-



eral small dams and irrigation projects were undertaken or projected; some progress was made in supplying improved seed to farmers; experts were brought in to improve the culture of silk cocoons.

Most of these measures, however, fell far short of the realities of the situation. Most of them were to the advantage of landowners rather than to the peasants themselves. It was in the nature of things, for instance, that only those who were already possessed of land borrowed money from the agricultural bank. Irrigation projects opened up new land but the land was still burdened with the landlord's rent. The agricultural school, at Karaj, a few miles from Teheran, spent most of its funds on beautiful grounds, and in teaching the theory of agriculture to sons of landowners rather than the practice of agriculture to the peasants who tilled the soil.

Industrialization in the cities and the competition of machine-made foreign wares had been effecting a gradual decline in handicraft industry, and to these forces were added, during the war, monetary inflation. Silver and copper became almost unobtainable for the metal handicraft industries, and the great demand for labor by the occupying forces drew artisans away from the bench. Moreover, because of the artificial price level, the prices of these articles were higher in Iran than abroad, and this, combined with the dislocation of markets, discouraged production.

#### *War-Time Policies and Measures*

Following the abdication of Riza Shah Pahlavi, but while the war was still in progress and the government was laboring under the handicaps of an occupation and a restricted sovereignty, a number of measures were taken in the direction of improving the livelihood of the people. The American financial mission has already been discussed. In 1941, the government invited a mission from the United States to survey the educational needs of the people, and to recommend a program. Dr. Luther Winsor carried on a survey of irrigation possibilities, and some steps were taken in the direction of a public health program. In 1943, the statutes of the Bank Melli were revised by which the note-issue functions were separated from

the banking functions in accordance with Bank of England practice.

Most of these measures bore little fruit during the war, but they served to clarify the main problems that confronted the country and paved the way for the program of economic reforms subsequently announced in 1946.

#### B. AGRICULTURAL NEEDS

Because of war dislocations and other difficulties, the only member of the educational mission to reach Iran was Harold B. Allen, Director of Education of the Near East Foundation. Allen is a leading authority on village and rural rehabilitation, and he took with him the interest of the Foundation, which for some fifteen years had been carrying on a valuable work in village and rural rehabilitation in Bulgaria, Greece, and Syria.

##### *The Allen Survey*

Allen arrived in Iran in 1943, and following a survey made under the auspices of the Foundation, presented a series of reports to the Iranian government. The findings and recommendations he made, in summary, are as follows:

- (1) The unquestioned fertility of the soil, and the productivity of the soil wherever water is available.
- (2) The relative ease with which the water problem can be improved under proper handling. Allen recommends, as the simplest and least expensive method of providing water, the restoration and extension of the ancient *kanat*, or underground canal, system. Because of the nature of the water sheds, soil structure, and other factors, only a few areas exist where large dam and irrigation projects are feasible; moreover, greater good would be gained by a diffusion of expenditure.

In addition to extending the *kanat* system, the possibilities of the underground water table should be explored. Vast areas exist, too distant from the mountain springs for the use of *kanats*, where underground water can be tapped. In some cases, artesian wells are possible; in other cases the water must be lifted. Advantage should be taken of the constancy of the winds on the plateau, through the introduction, or rather rein-

troduction, of windmills to operate pumps. Besides windmills, motor-driven pumps, employing the fuel-oil resources of the country, might be widely used.

(3) The question of ownership of the *kanats* must be dealt with. Generally, the construction of a *kanat* is an undertaking beyond the means of the peasant, and since one *kanat* will serve to irrigate more land than a single family can till, there seems to be some place for a limited form of land capitalism. Allen is of the opinion, however, that the peasants are fully capable of operating the *kanats* as a co-operative project. His view, accordingly, is that the policy of the government should be to build *kanats*, or to assist in their building, in order to open new land for cultivation. This land should be sold to individual peasants, and the *kanats* should thereupon be turned over to the peasants to manage.

(4) The problem of land tenure and absentee landlordism must be solved before the country can hope for any real agricultural progress. Allen thinks that this land reform should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary; that in villages that have long been under the control of landlords a sudden dispossession of the landlords would find the peasants unprepared to assume the responsibilities of ownership. He believes, however, that the peasants are fully capable of independence, and it was his observation that wherever the peasants have acquired ownership of the land an immediate improvement in conditions resulted. He advocates a progressive program of pre-empting estates by purchase and their resale on favorable terms to the peasants.

Allen found the government generally aware of the seriousness of the land-tenure problem, and even among the land-owning classes, he states, he encountered an increasing willingness to accept the necessities of reform.

My observations and conclusions relative to this problem of land tenure are quickly stated. The peasants who farm their own small plots utilize their land just a little more effectively; they grow a little more food; they secure slightly better yields; have somewhat more liveable homes; are more insistent on demanding educational facilities for their children and medical attention for their families. They show more independence of thought and action, more spirit. Even where their conditions were miserable they stated emphatically that



*Photo courtesy United States Army Signal C*

N AND HIS SONS WITH HOES, NEAR DORUD



*Photo courtesy United States Army Si*

8a RUG WEAVING, HAMADAN

NAWAH SALAR JUNG BAKADUK

b. RUG WEAVER TRIMMING RUG

*Photo*



they would not change places with compatriots of theirs who are in more productive areas but working under the feudal system.<sup>2</sup>

Allen goes on to say:

A government that is thoroughly committed to a policy of protecting and developing its greatest resource (the land and the peasant population), a proper system of land tenure and a constantly increasing supply of water are, in my opinion, the foundation stones of all rural progress in Iran. With these factors assured we are in a position to give serious consideration to other important aspects of village welfare.<sup>3</sup>

(5) The fundamental need, Allen points out, is adult education, both social and technical, that is, the need to instruct the peasant in improved processes of agriculture, sanitation, housing, and co-operative living.

#### *League of Nations Survey*

Prior to the Allen survey, a League of Nations Opium Commission, which visited Iran in 1925, made recommendations regarding the development of agricultural crops in substitution for the opium poppy, and the findings of this Commission, long ignored, may profitably be recalled.

The Commission pointed out that much could be done to revive the silk industry, which until the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was all but destroyed by the pébrine blight, was a principal supplier to the European market. Subsequently, the world market was largely pre-empted by the Japanese, who adopted modern techniques of growing, preparing, and reeling for the trade. Persian silk possesses, however, distinctive characteristics that still make it prized by connoisseurs, but the industry would need to be reorganized to meet modern trade requirements, particularly in regard to reeling.

The Commission also pointed out that the Iranian climate is especially favorable to the growing of other products, by which it could assume a unique position in world trade. It

<sup>2</sup> Allen, H. B., *Studies in Rural Education (Rural Welfare) in Iran* by authority of the Imperial Government of Iran, Teheran, 1943.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

recommended that attention be given to the cultivation of aromatic plants, such as the rose, jasmine, mint (*Mentha piperita*), tarragon, anise (*Pimpinella anisum*), the rose geranium, lavender, saffron (*Crocus sativus*), iris (*Iris pallida*), and others. Formerly, the extraction of these oils was an extensive industry. (The word *attar* is the English equivalent of the Persian *atr* by which these oils were originally known in the trade.) There is no reason, the Commission stated, why this industry should not again be more extensively developed, as it is in the Balkans, where it is highly profitable. Other products that are in world demand, for the growing of which the soil and climate of Iran are highly favorable, are various oleaginous plants, such as the mandab (*Eruca sativa*), sesame (*Sesamum indicum*), castor-oil beans (*Ricinus communis*), soy beans (*Soja hispida*), colza (*Brassica campestris*), and rape (*Brassica napus*).

#### *Need for Farm Implements*

One of the most useful things the government could do to improve agriculture would be to encourage the importation or local manufacture of simple farm tools and implements. The import statistics contain an item of agricultural implements, but examination of the components of this item reveal them to be chiefly machine cultivators, threshing machines, and other equipment used in large-scale farming. What the peasant needs today are steel hoes and spades, a hand cultivator, a steel plow suitable for an ox, and other elementary equipment.

In 1934, the United States exported to Iran goods to the value of \$3,686,515, of which \$1,243,629 consisted of trucks, while exports of farm implements amounted to \$20,396, of which the principal item was machines. In 1936, Iran purchased from the United States \$1,584,888 worth of trucks and \$20,199 worth of implements of cultivation. In 1937 and 1938, no exports of farm implements from the United States are recorded, but there was sent \$1,485,485 worth of trucks, in addition to passenger automobiles and parts. In 1939, American exports to Iran of implements of cultivation amounted to \$6,499, and in 1940 to but \$29 out of total exports of \$2,398,559 and \$4,406,199.

## C. HANDICRAFT

The twentieth century has witnessed the gradual extinction in Iran of a number of famous industries which have been unable to withstand the impact of the machine. Formerly, marvelous fabrics of silk, wool, and cotton were produced on the Persian looms and sold throughout the world. This weaving industry has now practically disappeared. Embroideries have almost vanished, while the industries of inlaying, carving, enameling, and metal work, once famous, are falling into desuetude, or show evidence of deterioration in design because of the vain effort to meet the competition of machine-made articles. Even the interesting hand-printed cottons (*kalamkar*) are now made of imported rather than native cotton and are of inferior design.

'There is every reason why these native industries should be saved,' says the Opium Commission Report, 'and saved while there are yet artisans to teach the younger generation.' As Western civilization becomes more and more surfeited with stereotyped machine-made wares, it will seek the refreshment and inspiration that is to be found only in the individuality of handicraft, and it will return to those lands where the highest traditions of handicraft have been maintained. Furthermore, the maintenance of handicraft provides an independence and security from the periodic convulsions that are seemingly the inevitable accompaniment of highly organized, mass-production industry. The Opium Commission Report states further that,

India has had some success in introducing improved hand looms, and there is no contribution which would do more to revive the village and cottage industries of Iran than the introduction of simple machines for ginning, carding, spinning and weaving the various tissues which abound and are native to the country.

An industry, formerly of considerable importance, and which the Commission regarded as susceptible of revival as a result of the development of the oil fields, is that of tile and pottery work. Iran does not possess the resources of kaolin that China enjoys, which are so necessary for the finest porcelains, but glazed tiles and glass work have been famous from antiq-



uity. The great handicap has been the lack of fuel to burn in the kilns. The abundance of fuel oil and the existence of coal and lignite in various parts of the country offer a means of correcting this deficiency.

#### D. THE CARPET INDUSTRY

There remains the question of the future of the Persian carpet industry. It has been the least affected by the impact of industrialism and today provides the largest single item of export apart from oil. Despite the development of machines that are capable of producing carpets in such close imitation of the hand-made article, not only in the complexity of design and variety of color but in the nap itself, that they deceive any but an expert, the hand-woven Persian carpet continues to find a steady demand throughout the world. It is the standard of excellence and artistry, and is not surpassed by the Chinese, Turkish, Indian, or the North African.

##### *Government Policy Towards Carpet Industry*

Whether craft standards are seriously impaired today is a debatable question. In 1921-3, during my earlier stay in Iran, A. C. Edwards, head of a large carpet export firm, and a leading authority on carpets, gave the opinion that carpets then being woven were not inferior in design, color, and texture to the finest productions of the past. A general opinion held today, however, is that standards have since deteriorated, and whether this is temporary or not would seem to depend upon (a) the policies adopted by the government, and (b) the continued independence of Iran.

Concerning the carpet industry directly, the government has shown a keen interest and has endeavored to maintain craft standards. Where standards were threatened by the development of synthetic (aniline) dyes, and the substitution of these for the locally extracted vegetable dyes, the importation of such dyes for carpet making was forbidden. Aniline dyes continued to be imported for the textile-weaving factories, however, and whether they will eventually corrupt the carpet-weaving industry will depend upon the continued care with which the government regulates this traffic.

A deteriorating influence that has not been eliminated has been the establishment of 'factories' by the principal carpet importing houses. In these factories, the carpets are still handwoven—since this is the essential characteristic of such carpets—but the patterns are provided by the importer, and are usually the simpler, bolder designs which are more easily executed and which at the same time are popular among the trade. 'Factory'-made carpets are usually of looser texture, a factor also tending to cheapen the price, and the nap is left long rather than close sheared as in the finest productions.

Among the measures taken by the government to preserve the native handicraft industry was the establishment of an Institute of Arts and Crafts in Teheran, the purposes of which were to revive and preserve the ancient designs and to foster finer standards of craftsmanship. The results of this effort have been somewhat abortive. While standards of precision are probably as high today as ever, and carpets of unsurpassed fineness of texture are still being made, the effect upon design has been negligible.

### *Sources of Artistic Inspiration*

The weaving of a carpet is essentially an artistic rather than a commercial undertaking. The finest carpets are produced in the tents of the nomads and in the villages, where the weaving is a part-time occupation and largely in the nature of an artistic expression. If the product is sold it is because the household possesses a surplus, and the proceeds of the sale will purchase a samovar, a piece of silk, or, in time of need, some article of necessity.

The best evidence of this characteristic of the industry is that among the people carpets are prized for themselves, and in the most remote tent can be found the finest carpets, woven for the owner's satisfaction, rather than for the market.

The importation of foreign wares exercises an influence on craft standards. When the weaver discovers a preference for the articles of the bazaar, and his product acquires in his eyes a monetary rather than artistic value, his standards of workmanship decline. The inspiration deteriorates. Contact with foreign civilization, with its bewildering variety of articles

creating desire for possession, fosters this tendency to commercialization.

Another factor leading to deterioration in rug weaving is the decay of the religious spirit in Iran, particularly the decay of Islam. The stimulus to employ the creative talents in the embellishment of mosques with marvelous and unsurpassed faience work, with intricately pierced and engraved brass lamps, inlaid furniture, carpets of unimaginable texture and design, no longer exists. Design, which is the principal characteristic of Persian art, is a mode of expression particularly adapted to convey the abstract conceptions of God which are emphasized in Islamic theology. When the Islamic spirit merged with the cultural traditions of Iran there resulted a magnificent florescence of art in materials, textiles, and poetry, which reached its heights in Sufi poetry, the Persian mosque, and the Persian rug. One cannot gaze at one of the mosque rugs without being imbued with an inner exaltation, all the more pervasive and mysterious because of its lack of concreteness. The only approach in mood to these works of art is a symphonic composition, with which they have, in their design, much in common.

Capacity and aptitude for design, though it reached its finest expression in association with Islamic inspiration, both antedates and survives Islam. Thus it was that this artistic development reached its apex during the Safavid dynasty, roughly from the end of the fifteenth century through the seventeenth century, when Islamic inspiration was fortified by a great burst of national glory which culminated in the reign of Shah Abbas the Great (1587-1629).

The people are no longer imbued with the religious fervor and faith that have in the past stimulated the production of great art, and the country no longer enjoys the material power and grandeur that during the Safavid and earlier periods were an encouragement and stimulus to artistic creativeness. The creative instinct, however, is not dead, nor have the people yet lost the sense of national identity and the cultural tradition which are the fountainhead of their creative artistry. The latent sources of creativeness still exist, and are preserved, and find such expression as the times permit. To the continuing independence of the nation may be attributed in large measure

the continued production of Persian rugs and handicraft that are still supreme in their field. It is a fair conclusion that should the national independence be extinguished, either in fact or by economic and political pressures by which the people were reduced to subservience to another power, there would result an eclipse of a splendid cultural tradition, which would be a supreme loss not only to the Iranian people but to the world.

#### E. NEW ECONOMIC PROGRAM

In April 1945, following the dissolution of the American financial mission, the council of ministers created a Supreme Economic Council charged with formulating economic policies for the country. This Council was composed of twenty-five members, of whom nine represented various ministries and State organizations and the remainder were appointed by the prime minister. On 30 March 1946, the prime minister, then Ahmad Ghavam Saltaneh, announced the following policy of the government:

(1) to raise the standard of living by increased production and increased consumption;

(2) to assure a just distribution of wealth produced.

To carry out this policy the following program was laid down:

(1) The retention and strengthening of the foreign-trade monopoly as the basis of the country's economic policy.

(2) Efforts to increase exports by better methods of preparation and packaging, increased production, and adjustment of the internal price level to the world price level.

(3) Maintenance of the quota on imports to prevent competition with domestic products, except on certain products currently in short supply, such as sugar and tea.

(4) Support and stimulation of industrialization by economic planning and other measures. Existing industries, whether State-owned or not, born of the foreign-trade monopoly, to receive continued support and protection.

(5) Labor relations to be given especial consideration, and application to be made to the International Labor Office for assistance and counsel in the development of a legal code.

(6) A five-year plan for municipal improvements. The report pointed out that the sixty cities in Iran having a munici-

pal status, including the capital, are without water, sewage, or sanitary systems, and largely without lighting or telephone service.

(7) The actual production and the living requirements of the peasant to be determined, and the traditional distribution of the produce of the land according to the ownership of the factors of production to be abolished; instead, the product to be distributed primarily with regard to the well-being of the peasant and his family.

(8) A plan for the division and sale of State domain on term payments to be rapidly executed for the purpose of encouraging the creation of a class of small landowners.

(9) A program of irrigation to be adopted.

(10) Communications to be improved.

(11) A program for development of mineral resources to be prepared.

### *Prevailing Tendencies*

How effective this program will be remains to be seen. As the Majlis was not in session, the program rested on ministerial fiat, and much will depend upon the support it receives from the people and the vigor with which it is executed. It is of interest, however, as representative of the present governing tendencies in Iran. It will be noted that the program is almost exclusively economic in its objects, and while it recognizes the moral imperative of a more equitable distribution of the fruits of enterprise, it ignores such problems as child labor, status of women, education in citizenship, public health, and, in particular, a system of justice and public administration giving assurance that the fruits of economic reform will be realized.

### *Increased Government Intervention*

The views of the Economic Committee, the recommendations of which had led to the establishment of the Supreme Economic Council, are of interest as indicating prevailing thought among the governing classes on the subject of the government's functions in the economy of the country.

Government intervention in economic affairs began ten years ago. The normal course of the economic life was changed in various ways

by measures taken by the Government; namely, the establishment of monopolies, the taking over by the Government of the direct charge of sales and purchases, production and transportation of goods and the enactment of laws and regulations. This intervention in many cases was either deemed unavoidable or thought to be beneficial to the Government.<sup>4</sup>

Among the reasons assigned for State intervention were the following: (a) the need for setting up an organization to deal with countries where both internal and foreign trade were under government monopoly; (b) to increase State revenues; (c) to limit imports in order to conserve the foreign-exchange resources; (d) to protect home industries and improve the quality of goods made locally either for consumption or export; and (e) to obtain better terms in the world markets for goods sold or purchased.

The report conceded that these objects had not been attained, largely because of mismanagement and lack of proper studies, and that had the war not intervened, the policy would have been abandoned or restricted. A policy of minimizing government intervention was indeed adopted after 1941, but the trend of events neutralized its effect, and government intervention actually expanded. 'Thus, today by far the greatest part of imports and exports of this country is being either handled directly by the Government, or controlled and supervised by it,' says the report, which goes on to say:

The decision to set up a new organization . . . would not seem at first glance to be conducive to a great improvement, considering the drawbacks and disadvantages of the Government's direct economic activities, and it would look as though the best arrangement would be one which encouraged the freedom of action by individuals in the economic sphere and restricted, as far as practicable, any restriction imposed on it.

After surveying the condition of the country and the general trend abroad, however, the report concluded that it was both impossible and contrary to the public interest for the government to discontinue its economic activities. Concerning external factors, the report commented, significantly:

<sup>4</sup> 'Report of the Economic Committee,' in *Bulletin of Bank Melli*, February-March 1945.

Further, the war economy in other countries is so organized that foreign trade everywhere is under State management, and governments are not generally willing, nor even prepared, to do business with individuals. . . Again, it should be noted that the world is going through a great economic transition, and it is probable that after the war the economic structure of the Great Powers, particularly so far as foreign trade is concerned, will be re-built on a new basis widely different from the pre-war structure.

### *Land-Tenure Program*

Subsequent to the announcement of 30 March 1946, Premier Ghavam made (on 6 June) a further pronouncement on the program of land-tenure reform. The extent to which liberal tendencies have taken root in the political consciousness of the governing classes is suggested to some extent by the language accompanying the declaration.

Iran will be great only when its inhabitants are people who have gained knowledge, strength, freedom, and health. In my opinion, the transfer of State land to peasants without compensation is the first and main step. By strengthening and increasing the small holders among the peasants a true right of property will be established throughout the country. I must point out that I do not intend to abolish private property as such. Only those persons can be considered rightful owners of land who make an effort to cultivate the land.

The existing order throughout the world cannot tolerate that any person under the pretext of the so-called right of ownership should leave hundreds of thousands of square meters of land untilled, or that estates of hundreds of hectares should remain unexploited and lie waste.

He then announced the intention of the government to place into effect measures establishing the relations between landlords and tenants, and guaranteeing freedom and legal rights to tenants; giving landowners a time limit within which to place land in cultivation, on penalty of confiscation; and defining the duties of landlords.

Along with this program of land reform, the government concluded an understanding with the Near East Foundation whereby the Foundation would establish, with government assistance, a program of rural education through model villages and adult education.

## II

### THE OPIUM QUESTION

#### A. IRAN AND THE INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC

THE GOVERNMENT of Iran has not been noted for co-operation in international efforts to control the opium trade, or for efforts to restrict the use of opium among its own people.

Iran has never adhered to any of the opium treaties, with the result that opium produced in that country has been sold to any and all buyers. Iranian opium has been found in almost all seizures of illicit opium smuggled into this country and Canada. It was a major source of difficulty in the Far East, when the government monopoly systems were attempting to prevent opium from being smuggled into their territories, as 'bootleg' competition for government sales. Shipments of many tons left Bushire, consigned ostensibly to Vladivostok, but actually appeared in every port where there was a smuggling market. These facts were made public year after year in the meetings of the Opium Advisory Committee at Geneva, but without effect on Iranian policy.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of Iranian official complacency towards opium traffic, opium consumption among the Iranian people has become one of the most serious problems confronting the country today.

The view that opium is a curse is of course not one shared by all authorities, and Iranian dalliance with the opium question has had its defenders abroad. The late Lord Curzon, writing in 1892, spoke of the government's 'wise and resolute interference' in the opium trade, as a result of which 'under strict supervision the trade revived, and has now reached very large dimensions.'<sup>2</sup>

And Sir Arnold Wilson, writing in 1933, speaks of opium indulgently in the following language:

<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, 21 July 1944.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. II, p. 499.



As in India, it is the soldier's emergency ration, the muleteer's tonic and the starveling's solace; it is daily used to ease the pain of thousands of sick and injured men who cannot hope to obtain skilled medical assistance. Physically and mentally the Persian nation as a whole need not be afraid to challenge comparison with the polyglot communities of the New World, for whose sake it is apparently desired to impoverish and to circumvent the liberties of Eastern races who can, for the most part, use without abusing stimulants. The existence in Western countries of a few weak-minded drug addicts is a poor excuse for under-mining by harassing legislation the sturdy individualism that is one of the most enduring assets of the Persian race.<sup>3</sup>

### *Early Attempts to Restrict Opium Cultivation*

Although the Iranian government has generally been indulgent towards the opium traffic, it is of interest that during those periods in modern Iranian history when public sentiment was vocal and the government was responsive to such sentiment, efforts were made to cope with the problem. In the early days of the Constitution, in 1908, when the government was momentarily in possession of the people, among the reforms undertaken was the reduction of opium culture. This was the Opium Limitation Act, which imposed a tax of 3 shahis per miscal<sup>4</sup> on opium production, the tax to be increased each year by 3 shahis until 1917, by which time, it was expected, the prohibitive tax would have eliminated its culture. The act failed of its purposes, of course, though the tax did reach a figure of 21 shahis per miscal, at which figure it was fixed until 1928.

Thus, Iran was the first of the opium-producing countries in modern times to attempt administrative action looking towards the limitation of opium cultivation.

### *International Efforts at Opium Control*

In 1909, under the stimulus of the United States government, which had had to deal with the opium question in the Philippines and which was concerned with the spread of the traffic to the Western hemisphere, an international conference on the opium traffic was convened in Shanghai. In 1912,

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit. p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> A miscal weighs 4.64 grams.

a second conference, convened at The Hague, resulted in an agreement by which the signatory powers bound themselves not to export opium to countries having prohibitions against its import except on import licenses granted by that government. The government of Iran was a signatory to The Hague Convention, but it made a reservation regarding this provision.

In 1909, the British government, which had forced the opium trade on China by the Opium War of 1840-42, reversed its policy and concluded with the Chinese government an agreement whereby opium exports from India would be reduced one-tenth each year; such exports actually terminated in 1913. In a note to the American government, dated 9 January 1925, the British government requested the United States to support the representations it was making to the government of Iran regarding more effective control of illicit trade in opium. In 1935 Great Britain took further steps to restrict the Far Eastern opium traffic by prohibiting British vessels from carrying opium, except opium licensed for medicinal use or for sale to the opium monopolies in British possessions. (It did not, however, restrict to medicinal uses the sale of opium by the opium monopolies in these possessions.) In 1926, the government of India announced that all exports of opium for other than medicinal purposes would be reduced by one-tenth each year and terminated entirely by 1936, and in 1940 reported that all such exports had ceased by 1 January 1936.

#### B. OFFICIAL POLICY

As a result of the British withdrawal from the opium-carrying trade, and the refusal of the Iranian government to adhere to the licensing system created by The Hague Convention, a great deal of this trade, which had formerly had its source in the Indian crop, now passed to Iran, and Iran became the principal source of opium for illicit trade in the Far East.

#### *League of Nations Opium Commission*

In 1923, the opium question was renewed before the League of Nations, at the instance of the United States, and by a Convention, signed in 1925, effective in 1928, the Permanent Central Opium Board was established, together with a mandatory

licensing system. In the discussions leading to the Convention, the Iranian delegate protested his government's interest in the question, but pointed out the difficulties of restricting opium production without foreign assistance. He complained in particular of import duties levied by other governments (indicating the United States) upon Iranian products, such as rugs, and of the necessity of developing substitute crops and industries. Specifically, the delegate announced that his government would withdraw its reservation to the Opium Convention of 1912 as soon as a practical scheme for replacing opium cultivation by other industries or crops had been drawn up. The significance of the delegate's statement may be found in the opium statistics of Iran. In 1924-5, exports of opium amounted to 1,077,290 pounds, and represented 16.4 per cent of total exports exclusive of oil, and the taxes on opium amounted to 9 per cent of the total revenue. At that time it was estimated that around one-third of the total opium crop escaped government scrutiny and passed into illicit trade for domestic consumption or for export.

As a result of the delegate's statement, the League of Nations dispatched to Iran a commission headed by Frederic A. Delano of the United States to look into the production of opium and to recommend steps for its control. The Commission visited Iran in 1926, and as a result of its investigation reported that 'while difficult of accomplishment, it is possible, and to the economic interest of Persia, to adopt a program for the gradual diminution of the cultivation of the opium poppy,' and went on to recommend a number of practical measures for the development of substitute crops and of industries which would absorb the energies of the people and provide an equivalent livelihood. These recommendations have been discussed in the preceding chapter.

### *Reservations of the Iranian Government*

The government accepted the recommendations of the Commission and announced its intention of reducing production of opium to medicinal requirements:

It is our conviction that the production of opium can be curtailed . . . nevertheless the Persian Government will take immediate measures to reduce the production of opium to medicinal requirements

and will prosecute these measures as rapidly as circumstances permit. The Government is likewise determined to put a stop to the smoking of opium within the country as rapidly as possible.<sup>5</sup>

The government, however, hedged its acceptance of these recommendations with the qualification that it could not undertake the program until the government had obtained tariff autonomy, and unless other governments were prepared to reduce import duties on Iranian goods. Despite the fact that tariff autonomy was obtained in 1928, no measures were adopted to put into effect the recommendations of the Commission, or, for that matter, to impose controls on the export of opium.

### *Opium Monopoly Created*

The government had for many years maintained a certain supervision over the production of opium, mainly because of its importance as a source of tax revenue, and in 1928 an opium monopoly was established by which the government assumed control of all internal trade in opium, while continuing, nevertheless, to permit its export to any destination, provided the government dues were paid.

Indicative of popular opinion in Iran on the opium question was the lively debate in the Majlis over the establishment of the monopoly, many of the deputies arguing that its effect would be not to restrict opium culture but simply to increase the government's revenues from this source. The Shah, however, who is reported himself to have been a user of opium, rejected these views, through his ministers, and the monopoly was established.

In 1929, as has been mentioned earlier, the monopoly of exports was ceded to a company organized by the Amine family of Isfahan, in which the Shah is reported to have held an interest. Under the terms of this monopoly the company was required to export a minimum of 6,500 chests of opium per annum, upon which it was required to pay an export tax ranging from £83 to £117 per chest. As a chest weighs approximately 160 pounds, the total minimum export provided for

<sup>5</sup> League of Nations Commission of Inquiry into the Production of Opium in Persia. *Report to the Council*, Geneva, 1926, p. 54. *Letter from Persian Prime Minister to President of Commission*, dated 1 June 1926.

by this concession was over 500 tons annually. The significance of this quantity may be indicated by the fact that total world requirements of opium for medicinal purposes do not exceed 400 tons annually.

The Monopoly Act required growers to obtain a license to cultivate the opium poppy, and required them to deposit the estimated amount of the crop in government warehouses, where it was prepared in sticks, for internal trade, or cakes, for export trade. A grower obtaining such a license was under no supervision so long as he delivered the estimated amount of the crop to the government warehouse. The tendency was to underestimate the crop. So far as is known, no limits were ever placed on the amount of ground that could be put into cultivation.

The Amine concession was canceled in 1933, and foreign trade in opium thereafter was free to anyone who paid the government export tax. Internal trade was handled by the Monopoly. Opium cultivation increased, partly as a result of the shift from the cultivation of cereals, which the government endeavored to keep cheap, partly as a result of indulgence shown by the government towards opium cultivation and use, and largely because of the stimulus of foreign demand, accompanied by higher prices for opium. With the British withdrawal from the opium trade, the Japanese had entered the market, and after 1931, following the occupation of Manchuria, had begun to buy opium in tremendous quantities and to encourage its use among the conquered peoples of China. Japanese takings of Iranian opium became enormous in 1937 and 1938. One Japanese ship, the SS *Muko Maru*, loaded 1,500 chests (240,000 lbs.) on 29 December 1937; in the first quarter of 1938, orders were placed by the Japanese for 2,900 chests, of which 1,128 chests were shipped in the first 17 days of March 1938.<sup>6</sup>

### C. INCREASE IN OPIUM CONSUMPTION

Meantime, the government of Iran did little to restrict consumption of opium among its people. Opium was freely obtainable from the Monopoly and could be purchased for smoking

<sup>6</sup> *U. S. Legation reports.*

or eating at every pharmacy and tea house. The tax was indeed raised from 21 shahis per miscal (equivalent to 1.05 rials) to 2.50 rials per miscal, and a register of opium smokers was established with the idea of limiting the sale to registered users, but no one would voluntarily admit being a user, nor would he pay the high tax so long as opium could be obtained illicitly. In 1931, the tax was reduced to .50 rials per miscal in the poppy-growing areas, with the result that more of the traffic now flowed through the Monopoly. Monopoly sales increased as follows: <sup>1</sup>

OPIUM MONOPOLY SALES IN IRAN  
1930-34

<i>Year Ended 20 March</i>	<i>Kilograms</i>
1930	18,132
1931	29,131
1932	88,510
1933	132,560
1934	155,486

The most authoritative figures on the total production of opium in Iran are those submitted to the Permanent Central Opium Board of the League of Nations, but how much contraband production is not represented in the figures is hard to say. In 1924-5, as stated, the Commission of Inquiry into the Production of Opium in Persia was officially advised that an estimated one-third of the crop escaped government scrutiny, but it is generally understood that after the establishment of the Opium Monopoly, a larger percentage of total production was under government control. The officially reported production is as follows:

OPIUM PRODUCTION IN IRAN  
1929-40

<i>Year Ended 20 March</i>	<i>Kilograms</i>
1929	686,662
1930	556,617
1931	898,338
1932	547,726
1933	461,414

<sup>1</sup> League of Nations, *Reports of Advisory Committee on Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs*, Geneva.

<i>Year Ended 20 March</i>	<i>Kilograms</i>
1934	459,243
1935	833,499
1936	1,346,712
1937	521,715
1938	—
1939	672,058
1940	752,250

### *Effect of World War II*

In 1941, the Far Eastern market for Iranian opium was suddenly cut off as a result of the entry of Japan into the war, and at the same time domestic controls of opium production were seriously relaxed owing to the disintegration of the administration following the Russo-British occupation. Total reported production of opium showed a sharp decline, as follows:

OPIUM PRODUCTION IN IRAN 1941-4	
<i>Year Ended 20 March</i>	<i>Kilograms</i>
1941	210,200
1942	214,900
1943	130,500
1944	192,000

Indicative of the effect of the occupation are the figures for government opium collections in 1943 and 1944. While total collections increased from 130,500 kilos in 1943 to 192,000 kilos in 1944, collections dropped in Meshed, which was under Russian control, from 76,000 kilos to 41,000 kilos.

There is no reason to believe, however, that actual production declined to the extent indicated by the official figures. Reliable estimates are that production continued at a rate of 600 to 700 metric tons annually. This production now began to seek a demand locally and in near-by countries, and a certain amount was smuggled to the United States and elsewhere by small operators, Chinese seamen, and others, on the ships engaged in carrying war material to Persian Gulf ports. A substantial amount is believed to have gone overland to Cairo and Palestine by way of the Kurdish mountains. Domestic consumption increased enormously. In 1925, the Commission of

Inquiry obtained estimates indicating that from 25 to 50 per cent of the population consumed opium in one form or another. Estimates given me in 1943 by the medical adviser to the Iranian Ministry of Health, Lt. Colonel Alexander Neuwirth, were that probably 75 per cent of the population were opium consumers. In some large establishments, it was reported, employees were given fifteen-minute rest periods for smoking opium.

#### D. NEW GOVERNMENT POLICY

One of the reassuring features of the situation, however, was the reversal of government policy towards opium following the abdication of Riza Shah Pahlavi and the return to Constitutional government and free speech. Almost immediately after the abdication, in November 1941, the government issued a decree forbidding the further cultivation of opium in the provinces of Kirman, Baluchistan, and Yezd, and while these provinces today produce only a minor portion of the total crop, and although the decree was ineffective owing to the impotency of the government, it was indicative of the attitude now being adopted.

In the middle of December 1941, a further order was issued restricting the sale of Monopoly opium to pharmacies and to holders of coupons issued by the government, which coupons could be obtained only by persons forty years of age. This measure was also ineffectual, due to the fact that control of the trade had passed out of the hands of the Monopoly.

On 9 March 1942, the prime minister, Ali Soheily, presented to the Majlis a program for the gradual prohibition of the cultivation and consumption of opium, but no steps were taken to implement the program because of the breakdown of government authority.

In 1943, there was organized in Teheran an Anti-Opium and Alcohol Society, which began to publish estimates of opium production and consumption and to agitate for prohibition of opium culture. This Society estimated that 500 metric tons of opium were consumed in Iran in 1943 by addicts totaling 1,000,000, of whom 700,000 were believed to be smokers



and 300,000 eaters of opium. In 1944, the Society estimated the production to be 800 tons.

On 28 January 1945, a bill was introduced in the Majlis by Hassan Ali Farmand (Farmand-Garagozlou), deputy from Hamadan—the same deputy, incidentally, who had led the opposition in the Majlis in 1928 to the establishment of the Opium Monopoly—providing for the prohibition of the cultivation and use of opium. This bill was accompanied by a petition signed by 66 of the 136 deputies in the Majlis.

In 1943, the governments of Great Britain and the Netherlands announced that upon the freeing of their Far Eastern possessions, then under Japanese occupation, opium smoking under government license (the monopoly system) would be abolished, and trade in opium for other than medicinal purposes would be prohibited. In 1944, the United States government, as a result of a joint resolution of the Congress, sent a circular note to all opium-producing countries, urging them to take effective measures to reduce opium cultivation to legitimate needs. The government of Afghanistan, in response, announced that it was prohibiting, after 21 March 1945, the further cultivation of the opium poppy.

In Iran, the Majlis session expired in March 1946, and pending elections to the new Majlis, the government was under the control of the prime minister, Ahmad Ghavam Saltaneh. On 10 April 1946, the Prime Minister issued a decree instructing the governors of all provinces to stop the cultivation of the opium poppy as of this year and at the same time instructing the ministries of finance and agriculture to prepare regulations for the enforcement of the decree. Until the decree has been ratified by the Majlis and activated by administrative application, it is only a statement of policy, and it remains to be seen whether the production of opium will be effectively stopped.

### III

## TENDENCIES AND INFLUENCES

### A. WANE OF ISLAM

THE MOST significant change observable in Iran in an interval of twenty-five years is the wane of Islam. During this period Islam ceased to be the official religion of the State; the Koranic law was largely abrogated in favor of European legal concepts, and in those areas in which it still retains applicability its force has been greatly reduced. The status of women has been redeemed from much of the degradation it suffers under Islamic teaching, though women still do not enjoy the equality and respect accorded them in Christian communities. The Moslem clergy have been deprived of much of the influence and many of the prerogatives they enjoyed in former times, and great estates held by pious foundations have been brought under State control. The revolting spectacle of Moharram described in an earlier chapter, which has been the principal religious festival in Iran for at least four hundred years, has all but disappeared.

Significant also of the declining influence of Islam among the people is the increasing receptivity to Western modes of thought and action. The Islamic clergy are conservative, and though many of them have been leaders in the movement against monarchical absolutism and have supported reform of various sorts, generally their influence has been against change, particularly innovations from outside Islam.

#### *New Moral Spirit*

The interest in Western civilization that can be seen has largely arisen from a desire to possess the greater material well-being of the West, and is concerned with those modes that will bring a greater prosperity to the country. More and more, however, the social philosophy of the West is finding recognition in public policy, in a greater political democracy,

in concern for agriculture, in elevating the status of women. Standards of official morality have generally improved, though on this subject no statistics are available, and I have only my personal observation from residence in Iran after an interval of twenty-five years. During the latter 1930's, during the closing years of Riza Shah Pahlavi's reign, it is true, a terrible deterioration occurred in public morality. Under the example of the Shah, who became preoccupied with enlarging his private wealth, a veritable mania of profiteering, bribery, and speculation possessed the governing classes, infected the ranks of clerical employees, and spread to the bazaar, generally the most trustworthy element of the community. The disasters that overtook the country during World War II, however, exercised a chastening influence: standards of honesty and probity revived; during my experience as a principal official of the Iranian ministry of finance, in 1943, I found everywhere a high sense of patriotic duty and scrupulousness of official conduct, men eager to serve and trustworthy in action, if somewhat lacking in courage, men firm in their idealism, if as yet soft in conviction.

The weakness that can be observed is not so much the weakness of corruption, but the weakness of virtue that is without discipline or perspective. Officials are unwilling to accept responsibility for their acts, where blame or ridicule might follow; they are afraid to be unpopular with their friends or class. When courage is required, they will insist upon anonymity by acting through a 'commission.' Men who are themselves honest will condone dishonesty in others, particularly if friends or family are involved. Out of an abundance of affection or generosity, they will veer from official impartiality to do a favor. An arrant speculator of government funds will be allowed to escape prosecution out of regard for his family and the shame that would fall upon them.

## B. SOCIAL OUTLOOK

An encouraging feature in the outlook for the Iranian people is the evidence of an increasing awareness on the part of the government and the privileged classes of the need of fundamental reform in the social system of the country.

### *Land Tenure*

In regard to land tenure, the observations of H. B. Allen of the Near East Foundation are of interest. He states:

All of my observations relative to this matter were verified by many intelligent students of this problem who are themselves large landowners. They tell me that they are part of an ancient system that must go . . . and the landowners who emphasize this point of view are, in the main, the altruistic, philanthropic citizens, of whom there are many in Iran, who have constructed model villages for their people, established schools, provided medical facilities. But notwithstanding their sincere efforts in helping to create a better world, they state emphatically that they are part of a system which must pass away.<sup>1</sup>

### *Education*

Popular education has been receiving increasing attention. The principal emphasis during Riza Shah Pahlavi's regime was upon higher education, on the theory that institutions of higher education were necessary in order to prepare teachers for the elementary schools, and considerable pride was taken in the establishment of the University of Teheran in 1935. Nevertheless, a considerable extension of elementary education took place. During the first ten years of Riza Shah Pahlavi's regime appropriations for education increased by seven times the amount for 1924. In 1940, there were reported to be 8,237 schools of all kinds, with 496,960 students, but of the schools only 1,516 were State schools, the balance being private schools including the antiquated *Mekhtabs* (mullah schools). Public education on the elementary level is thus still rudimentary. Allen reported that in one district he visited of about 800 villages there were not over 30 schools; in another district of 500 villages there were 20 schools.

A serious blow to education was the closing of the missionary schools, beginning with the elementary schools in 1935 and culminating in the closing of the colleges in 1938, of which the most important were Alborz College for men and Sage College for women conducted by the Presbyterians, and the Stewart Memorial College conducted by the English Church

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit.

Missionary Society in Isfahan. Since the abdication of Riza Shah Pahlavi, however, some restrictions have been relaxed, and as the charters of the institutions were never annulled, hope is at present entertained by the missions that they may be permitted to resume educational work.

### *Public Health*

An effective public health program is as yet nonexistent in Iran, although the government has taken steps in this direction through the establishment of several elaborate hospitals in the cities, the establishment of a Pasteur Institute in Teheran for the production and distribution of vaccines, and the establishment of a medical school in the University. In the provinces, the principal source of competent medical attention has been the hospitals maintained by the missionaries and the itinerant missionary physicians. Iranian medical graduates, on the whole, prefer to establish their practice in the cities where life is pleasant rather than to accept the ardor of village or itinerant practice.

### *Emancipation of Women*

The reform of dress in Iran, including the abolition of the veil and the granting of freedom of movement to women has been treated in an earlier chapter. A legal emancipation of women also took place, though less decisive in character. The Koranic law, as has been noted, gave the husband almost complete power over his wife, and in particular permitted him to divorce her at will. Moreover, by fixing the age of puberty for women at nine years, it had encouraged the institution of child marriages. By law enacted on 4 August 1931, which required marriages and divorces to be registered with a civil official, the government was able to establish a minimum age of sixteen years for marriage. In 1935, the minimum age for marriage was legally fixed at sixteen years for women and eighteen years for men, and women were permitted to institute divorce actions in limited cases. A wife could sue for divorce if the husband failed to reveal, at the time of marriage, the existence of other wives, or if he married a second wife without her consent. Limited as was this reform, it represented a notable advance in women's rights since, while it did not

prohibit polygamy (authorized by the Koran) or the Shi'a institution of *muta'a*, or temporary marriage, it had the effect of discouraging these practices.

Nevertheless, the status of women still remains inferior to that of men, in that the husband may, in instances of persuasion or coercion, take more than one wife; he may still divorce his wife on any grounds by payment of the divorce settlement which was fixed at marriage; the husband is head of the family and has legal control over the children; a woman's inheritance rights are less than a man's; and women do not enjoy the privileges of voting and many other civil rights. Moreover, effective legal safeguards were not set up, and a woman without means or influence still is very much at the mercy of her husband.

### *The Press and Politics*

A feature of Iranian life following the abdication of Riza Shah Pahlavi was the revival of free speech and discussion and the mushrooming of newspapers and periodicals. While the journalistic ethics of these papers are low, by Western standards, and the editors employ such language in their attacks on public figures as would bring the authors into court for libel if written here, nevertheless, the general influence of their fervid discussion is salutary. The press is not entirely free, of course, for publications may appear only under license, and they are frequently suspended for their intemperate language. It is always a simple matter, however, to obtain a license, and generally the enterprising publisher simply adopts a new name for his sheet, obtains a license for its publication, and goes on his way with hardly a day lost in circulation.<sup>2</sup>

Along with publications came a burst of political parties, of which the most influential soon came to be the Tudeh (Masses), which had its adherents chiefly among factory employees and other workers in the larger cities, but also among the professional and intellectual classes. The Tudeh party enjoyed the support of Soviet propaganda and probably Soviet money, and it has been noted that it was strong in the areas under Soviet control, and after the Soviet evacuation it tended

<sup>2</sup> In 1946 there were about 250 licensed newspapers, but seldom more than a dozen were published at any one time.

to go underground except in the neighborhood of Soviet consulates. Nevertheless, even under foreign stimulus, the fact that the depressed classes should find vocal expression of even the most feeble sort must be regarded as a sign of political awakening.

### C. CHRISTIANITY

Foreign observers come and go, and many shake their heads in despair at what they find, and some of them hopelessly consign the country to perdition, or recommend a foreign protectorate as the only hope of salvation for Islam.

Among the Christian missionaries in Iran, who spend their lives among the people and know them most intimately, a reassuring optimism will be found. Of all foreigners in Iran they are the most hopeful, the most positive in their trust in the Iranian people, the most confident of the ability of the Iranians to solve their problems and to put their houses in order without aid of foreign intervention.

The optimism of the missionaries is paradoxical. It would appear that of all foreigners in Iran they should be the most discouraged. Their business is to win converts to the Christian faith. Despite a hundred years of missionary effort there exists as yet no widespread evangelical movement in Iran, no substantial Christian Church (apart from the ancient Armenian and Syrian rites). The number of Christian converts is infinitesimal.

The missionaries, however, can point to considerable fruit of the Christian spirit working in Iran. Characteristic of Iran today is the increasing acceptance of Christian ethical and moral teachings as a standard of conduct, and a marked, if more reserved, interest in the theological claims of Christianity as a way of personal salvation from sin and death. Acceptance of the ethical and moral teachings of Christianity as a basis of national life is found most generally among the educated classes, among whom exists a growing recognition of the importance of the moral question in Iran, and the necessity of reforming the institutions of the country according to a higher ethic. Social questions, such as land tenure, the proletariat, public health and education, domestic relations, opium production, commerce, public administration, justice, and the

relations between the government and the governed, are all being re-examined in the light of Christian moral teachings.<sup>3</sup>

Christian evangelists, however, are primarily interested in winning acknowledgment of their Christ as the Mediator between God and man, and acceptance of His Sacrifice as the atonement for human sin, and their optimism for the future of Iran is based upon the increasing receptiveness to the Gospel that they find among those who are seeking personal rather than national salvation. This receptiveness is found more and more among those classes of the population that formerly constituted the bulwark of resistance to change and the chief support of Islam: peasants, nomads, and workers.

### *A Case Example*

As an illustration of Christian evangelism at work, and the fruit it is bearing both in terms of personal regeneration and a more secure national existence, an instance in the experience of Bill Miller<sup>4</sup> of Teheran may be offered.

Bill is an ardent apostle of the Gospel, and is constantly touring among the villages distributing Scriptures and Gospel tracts and preaching the Word in season and out. He has been an evangelist in Iran for a quarter century.

In 1943, Bill made a missionary journey to eastern Iran, a part of the country he had not visited since a brief sojourn there some twenty-two years earlier, when he was a young man fresh from seminary. In those earlier days he traveled by horseback, by high-wheeled Russian droshky, or by springless *fourgon*, or wagon. Now he journeyed eastward by motor car, over a highway on which passed long caravans of motor trucks carrying war material to Russia, and making immense clouds of dust in the desert air.

Bill came to Seistan, which is inhabited by Baluchi nomads. At a roadside tea house, he made inquiry about conditions in

<sup>3</sup> The materialistic teachings of Communism, however, which regard the moral forces of the universe as subordinate to the material, and human existence as a struggle between opposing material forces (rather than as the warfare of good and evil, as taught by the Prophet Zoroaster) exercise considerable influence among certain classes of Iranians.

<sup>4</sup> The Reverend William McE. Miller of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.



the mountains, since he intended, if possible, to leave his car at Zahedan and to go up into the hills and preach.

He was told that conditions were tranquil. Thanks to one Sardar Nazar Khan, he was assured, he could now travel anywhere in the hills in peace and security.

### *Sardar Nazar Khan*

In the old days, before Sardar Nazar Khan became chief—the gossips at the tea house told him—conditions were otherwise. Then the roads were unsafe for travelers, and the firman of the Shah was much ignored in the valleys. The armies of His Majesty had often bivouacked in the foothills, but the tribes were never awed; sometimes the imperial armies would march in for a distance, and then the bullets would sing against the rocks, and even blood might flow; thereupon they would march out, and the tribes would resume their quarrels, and their pillage of the villages for grain and brass samovars and wives.

But now it was different. Sardar Nazar Khan had been elected chief of his tribe, and he had made changes. He had forbidden his young men to go on raids and had persuaded the old men of the wisdom of his view. He had settled the ancient feuds with the rival tribes. Finally, at the council of the tribal chieftains, he had urged them to compose their differences with the Shah. There should be, he proclaimed, an end to strife and rapine and bloodshed; men should live in unity and brotherly love. Persuasive was his plea, but more persuasive was the evidence of its results in his own tribe. The tribal chiefs accepted his views; negotiations with the government were authorized, and Sardar Nazar Khan was delegated to represent the tribes. The emissaries of the Shah, accustomed to wile, were likewise impressed by the young chief's fairness and sincerity; they reached with the chief a composition of their differences: the terms included a settlement of the imperial taxes due and a confirmation of the prescriptive rights and privileges of the tribes.

Sardar Nazar Khan, Bill was told, was a Christian.

This was extraordinary and joyful news to a man of Bill Miller's profession, and he expressed the hope of meeting this

Sardar Nazar Khan and of hearing the statement confirmed from his own lips.

### *Seed and Harvest*

As chance would have it, while Bill tarried in Zahedan, Sardar Nazar Khan, hearing of the missionary, journeyed down from the hills to see him. Bill expressed his delight at meeting a fellow-believer and brother in Christ, and then inquired how long his brother had been in the Lord, and by whom he had been baptized.

Thirteen years before, the chief explained, an English missionary had come into the mountains preaching, and had baptized him. For thirteen years he had not been in the company of a fellow Christian, nor had he received the sacraments of the Church. Still, he protested, he was a believer, and a follower of the Christ. Moreover, he assured Bill, he had been a Christian long before the coming of the English missionary. The Englishman had baptized him, but he had long known and loved the Christ.

Bill wanted to know how he had heard of the Christ.

'From reading the Bible,' responded Sardar Nazar Khan.

'But,' asked Bill, in perplexity, 'from whom did you obtain the Bible? Have you traveled to India; have you been in the cities?'

The chief regarded Bill fondly.

'No, my brother,' he said patiently, and with a beatific smile. 'Do you not recall how two and twenty years ago you visited our encampment on the slopes, how you gave me—I was a small boy then—a Bible, and asked me to read it? I have read it daily since, and more and more increase in faith and love toward Jesus, who is the peace of the world and the hope of the life to come.'

### *The Case of Red Beard*

This is only one of the more romantic of the stories of the Gospel road in Iran. The missionaries, if one will listen, have many others to tell. There is the case of the henna-bearded villager who had gone from his village to the town of Kashan to sell his cotton. There he met a man selling books and pur-

chased one. It was a copy of the Bible in Persian. He took it home and read it. He was moved to become a Christian. For several years he read and prayed, and then one day, hearing that there was in the capital, two hundred fifty miles away, a community of Christians, he set out to meet them, traveling by donkey and by bus. He reached the city and was directed to the mission. A service was in progress; he stood outside and listened, fearing to enter lest the Christians drive him from their house of worship as an infidel and unclean. After the service he waited, hoping to be spoken to, but no one seemed to notice the villager with the red beard and the frayed dress. He returned sadly to his village. 'I am not a Christian,' he thought, 'else they would have known me and would have spoken to me.' He read his Bible with renewed devotion, desperately anxious to be a true Christian. A year passed. Again he made his way to Teheran, and again he ventured to the steps of the church. On this occasion Bill Miller was present, returned from one of his evangelistic tours. As Bill stood on the steps, speaking to those that came, he caught sight of Red Beard, went to him and offered his hand in welcome, and asked him if he would like to attend the service. Red Beard was overjoyed. 'That is what I have come for,' he exclaimed. Later, Bill took the villager before the elders of the church, who examined him about his knowledge of the Scriptures and his faith. So familiar was he with the Bible, so evident his faith, that the elders recommended that instead of the customary year of probation he be granted baptism at once.

The missionaries are indeed hopeful. The doors, they say, are opening. Everywhere, they testify, there is a new willingness, or rather an eagerness, to hear the Gospel. Sales of the Bible in the Persian tongue, so the British and Foreign Bible Society reports, are breaking all records. There is more attention paid to preaching; inquirers form a steady stream to the doors of church and mission; converts are multiplying; and a strong, if small, indigenous Church has arisen.

Among all non-Christians, Moslems have historically been the most difficult to proselytize, the most adverse to evangelism. In Iran, however, mission board secretaries report, evangelistic effort is remarkably free, and missionary work regarded with

greater tolerance by government and masses than is found in any other Moslem land. Dr. W. N. Wysham, Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, wrote as follows:

In Iran today, a Moslem can become a Christian and be publicly baptized, yet retain the esteem of his friends. Usually he can continue his former occupation with no more than petty persecution. Iran is unique also in having churches largely composed of Moslem converts and with much of the lay leadership in their hands. . . In one Moslem land at least, the incredibly difficult preparatory period has ended and the era of the indigenous Christian Church has begun.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Christian Missions*

The missionaries have on the whole maintained their detachment from political partisanship and the differentiation of their purposes in Iran—as evangelists of Jesus Christ rather than as protagonists of Western civilization—and this policy has borne fruit. In 1942, when the tides of war were rolling into the Caucasus, and it appeared that Iran might be invaded by Germany, and the nationals of the governments at war with Germany were beginning to leave the country, the missions debated whether the missionaries should follow suit. The action they took is noteworthy. It stated:

The Mission in Iran believes in the light of facts now before it that the evacuation or abandonment of any one of our stations as a unit would result in serious if not irreparable damage to the work. . . We can prove the sincerity of our professions to have come to Iran to serve the people here in no better way than by standing by them in such a time. . . But it should be understood once and for all that all those who do not immediately ask for government transportation facilities have decided to remain in Iran for the duration, bring what it may in famine, suffering, persecution, and even death.

While a number did return home, chiefly women and children, enough remained on the field—some forty-five out of little more than a hundred—to keep all stations open.

The general effect of keeping the mission work going has been the most salutary. As stated by one missionary: 'Never

<sup>5</sup> *On This We Build in the Near East*. Publication of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. New York.

has the field been so ripe, never has there been so much freedom.'

### *Criticisms of Missionaries*

The missionaries have been frequently criticized, particularly by casual travelers, for the relative luxury in which they live. They have been charged with affecting superiority to the life of the common people and with failure to adopt the modes and customs of the country. Some basis exists for this complaint. Coming, as they do, from a civilization of so much greater material wealth, and more particularly from an atmosphere in which the prevalent conception of the good life is a clean and comfortable life, it is perhaps inevitable that they should bring with them, and be unwilling to forego standards of physical environment far higher than those they meet. On the other hand, the question may properly be raised about the advantages of their acting in a manner that is unnatural to them, or of adopting the modes of life with which the people of the country themselves are dissatisfied, and which they are seeking as rapidly as possible to discard. How little would have been gained by the practice, say, of wearing the ancient *kola*, and the loose-flowing *aba*, or outer robe which the government itself by decree subsequently prohibited its own people to wear.

More pertinent would be the charge that many of the missionaries have missed their true calling and the object of their endeavor, namely, the propagation of the Christian faith, and have become rather propagandists of a civilization that, however identified with Christianity, is in many respects as pagan as that of ancient Greece. Too many of the missionaries are still of the nineteenth-century cast of thought, which regarded the spread of education as the panacea to human ills and the Tree of Knowledge as the object of worship rather than God.

Perhaps unfortunate also for the spread of the Gospel was the apparent transfer of allegiance from Christ to Caesar which occurred during World War II in the case of many former missionaries. In the prosecution of the war in the Middle East, the American government engaged many of these persons in its service because of their familiarity with the country, the language, and the customs of the people. Numerous former

missionaries, either retired or unable to return to their missionary work for other reasons, accepted such employment and returned to Iran, no longer as missionaries, but as officials and servants of the State, the effect of which was to cause lifted eyebrows and mild cynicism on the part of Iranians. 'Here,' they were inclined to say, 'are your true purposes and allegiances revealed. In the final test, you are not Christians, but Americans. You came among us proclaiming Christ your King, and the Cross your banner, but all the time your true king was Caesar, your banner the eagle.'

Despite these failings and frailties, the missionaries have been, and remain, the truest friends the Iranians possess; what they offer is the surest hope for the future, and from their mission stations shines the brightest light in the pervading gloom. Not many of them are martyrs, but martyrdom has been their lot, and even in modern times, men like Dr. Shedd and Mr. Bachimont have offered their blood as the seed of the Kingdom. And many others have toiled patiently for years, in loneliness and devotion, that the Iranian people may be brought to the knowledge and love of God through His Son Jesus Christ, and in the end have found their graves, if in a field distant from their native land, among a people they have loved and served.

## IV

### IRAN AND RUSSIA

#### A. SOVIET RELUCTANCE TO EVACUATE IRAN

BY THE terms of the three-power agreement among Soviet Russia, Great Britain, and Iran, signed 29 January 1942, governing the occupation of Iran, Soviet Russia and Great Britain agreed to evacuate Iran within six months after the end of hostilities. It has been generally understood that this limit was 2 March 1946.

Towards the end of 1945, however, it became apparent that Soviet Russia was reluctant to fulfill its obligations. This may have been due to concern over the increasing influence of the United States in Iranian affairs, as a result of the presence of American forces in Iran, American advisers to the Iranian government, and American economic assistance to Iran. In May 1942, the United States had extended the benefits of the Lend-Lease Act to Iran, as a result of which the United States supplied Iran up to the end of 1945 with goods and services of a value of \$4,525,511, in addition to financial aid totaling \$2,606,300. In December 1942, the United States with Great Britain had agreed to supply Iran with food; following this, American advisers in increasing numbers began to take up positions in various government ministries. In September 1943, largely on American counsel, given by the President's special ambassador, Major General Patrick J. Hurley, Iran had declared war on Germany. This act had had no military significance, but it gave Iran a stronger juridical position in international councils.

At the meeting of the Big Three—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—in Teheran in November and December 1943, at the instance of President Roosevelt a joint statement regarding Iran was issued by which the three governments 'recognized the assistance which Iran had given in the prosecution of the war,' and declared themselves to be 'at one with the Govern-

ment of Iran in their desire for the maintenance of the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Iran.' In February 1944, the United States, in concert with Great Britain, raised its legation to an embassy, and in March 1944, negotiated a reciprocal-trade agreement with Iran.

### *Soviet Demands for Oil Concession*

In August 1944, representatives of three different groups of British and American interests appeared in Teheran seeking an oil concession in southeastern Iran. The Iranian government entered into negotiations with these representatives and engaged an American consulting firm<sup>1</sup> to advise it in the negotiations. While these negotiations were in progress, in mid-September 1944, a Soviet delegation, headed by Sergei Kavtaradze, vice-commissar for foreign affairs, and accompanied by a staff of over ninety persons, specialists in all branches of public administration, appeared in Teheran and demanded a concession in the north.

From an economic and political point of view, Russian participation in the northern developments would seem almost necessary, since the oil in this area would find its principal markets either in Russia or in world markets by transportation across Russian territory. In 1922, the Sinclair interests had negotiated a concession in this area, but when it became apparent that Russian co-operation in providing transit facilities would not be forthcoming, Sinclair abandoned its concession. Some time later another American group, organized as the Amiranian Oil Company, negotiated a concession in north-eastern and eastern Iran, but this was subsequently abandoned for the same reason.

It was obvious from the imposing character of the Soviet delegation, and the extensive character of the concessions sought—not only oil but all mineral deposits, together with extraterritorial rights in exploiting these resources—that what the Soviets proposed was not a purely commercial enterprise but actually the grant of an economic monopoly over all northern Iran, an area of some 216,000 square miles. In order to

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Hoover, Jr. and A. A. Curtice of Hoover, Curtice and Rubey. The oil interests that engaged in negotiations were the Royal-Dutch Shell, Sinclair, and Socony-Vacuum.



escape the embarrassing necessity of treating with the Soviets on a matter of such gravity at a time when Soviet troops were in effective occupation of the territory in question, Premier Sa'id Maraghei broke off negotiations with the British and American representatives, and Hoover and Curtice left the country on 7 October. On 16 October Premier Sa'id announced, after consultation with his cabinet, and a secret session of the Majlis, that the government would not consider any grant of concessions to foreigners so long as foreign troops were on its soil.

This announcement produced prompt repercussions. On 17 October there occurred tremendous demonstrations by the Soviet-fostered Tudeh party, which were followed by a virulent press campaign against the prime minister, in which the prime minister was accused of planning to destroy the working-class movement. The climax to this campaign came on 24 October 1944, when Kavtaradze declared: 'The disloyal and unfriendly attitude of Premier Sa'id excludes any possibility of further cooperation with him.'

A few days later (4 November), the Soviet organ, *Izvestia* of Moscow, raised the question of the legality of the presence of American troops in Iran. Finally, on 9 November, Premier Sa'id Maraghei resigned with his cabinet, and was succeeded on 20 November by Mustafa Goli Khan Bayat. Shortly thereafter, 3 December, a law was passed by the Majlis 'prohibiting any Iranian official from negotiating or signing any oil agreement, or even discussing the subject of oil with official or unofficial representatives of neighboring states or states which are not neighbors.'

Soviet Russia did not consider the question closed, but, on the contrary, made the grant of the concession a prerequisite to a renewal of friendly relations between the two governments. In order to conciliate its powerful neighbor, the Iranian government undertook to explore the idea of an Iranian corporation to exploit the northern oil resources with the help of Soviet capital, machinery, and technical advice. The Soviet delegation now responded by expressing its great appreciation of this spirit of co-operation, and insisting that the Soviet government be permitted to express its appreciation and good will by providing the Iranian government with experts in all

branches of public administration to assist in administering the country.

The Soviet delegation also requested the right to build a pipe line to the Persian Gulf, and to be permitted to guard the pipe line by maintaining troops along a corridor through which it would pass.

The Iranian government could not bring itself to accept or extend such generosity, and negotiations ceased.

### *Soviet-Sponsored Uprisings*

The displeasure of the Soviet government was manifested in due course. In November and December 1945, there occurred Soviet-fostered uprisings in Azerbaijan, and in an endeavor to compose the trouble, Bayat, who had been succeeded as premier by Ebrahim Hakimi, was appointed governor of Azerbaijan on the strength of his pro-Soviet tendencies. In a further effort to appease Russia, the 76-year-old Hakimi announced on 12 December that he would go to Moscow to negotiate a settlement. On 16 December, however, the Moscow radio announced that a revolutionary 'national government of Iranian Azerbaijan' had been established in northwestern Iran. The head of this government was one Jaafar Pishevari, head of the Soviet-supported Tudeh party in Azerbaijan. A quarter century earlier, Pishevari had been involved in the establishment of the 'Soviet Republic of Gilan,' and since 1921 had been a refugee in Russia. In 1937, after the invasion of Abyssinia, Pishevari had been sent back to Iran to organize a labor movement, but was arrested and imprisoned until released by Soviet forces when they occupied Iran in 1941. The Tudeh party in Azerbaijan now took the name of Democratic Party.

At the same time, additional Russian troops were dispatched to Iran, and Iranian troops sent to quell the 'insurrection' were forbidden to enter the Russian zone.

### B. INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

These events occurred on the eve of the meeting in Moscow of the foreign ministers of Russia, Great Britain, and the United States, and were perhaps hastened to avoid a discussion of the situation by presenting the conference with a *fait*

*accompli*. Previously, in November, the Iranian government had addressed a note to the Soviet government, but receiving an unsatisfactory reply, it now made a plea, through its ambassadors in London and Washington, to have the question placed on the agenda of the foreign ministers' conference. When the Soviet foreign minister, Vyacheslav M. Molotoff, protested his government's 'strict attachment' to its treaty obligation, and pointed out that some months remained before Soviet troops were required to evacuate under the treaty, the matter was laid aside. On 24 November, however, the American government proposed to Russia and Great Britain that since the war was over and no need existed for the occupation, the date of evacuation be advanced to not later than 1 January 1946. This proposal was declined by Soviet Russia, and the British followed suit; but the American government announced that all American forces would be evacuated by 1 January 1946, and such forces were so evacuated.

Premier Hakimi had not been permitted by the Soviets to go to Moscow. On 17 January 1946, therefore, he instructed that an appeal be presented to the Security Council of the United Nations at its first meeting, in London, and immediately resigned to avoid the reactions that inevitably followed. On 19 January, the Iranian ambassador to London, Taqizadeh, presented the appeal, which charged Soviet Russia with interference in Iranian internal affairs, and with creating a situation that might lead to international friction. The Soviet delegate, Vishinsky, now challenged the validity of the appeal as coming from a government no longer in existence, but so impressive was the recital of facts presented by Taqizadeh that the Council admitted the appeal and placed the case on the agenda.

On 23 January, Ahmad Ghavam Saltaneh, a wealthy landowner with estates in Azerbaijan, who had served intermittently as premier since 1922, and who was generally regarded as pro-Russian, took the reins of government. As he indicated a more pliant attitude and a willingness to negotiate, the Security Council, on 30 January 1946, referred the dispute to 'direct negotiations' between the parties, in accordance with one of the Charter provisions, but directed the parties to advise the Council of the progress of the negotiations.

It was not until the middle of February that Ghavam was able to form a cabinet satisfactory to the Majlis, but finally, on 26 February, Ghavam went to Moscow to negotiate with Soviet Russia in accordance with the suggestions of the Security Council. On 1 March, while he was still in Moscow, the Moscow radio announced that evacuation of Russian troops would begin on 2 March from 'districts where the situation was relatively quiet'—namely the eastern part of Iran—but that 'as to Soviet forces in other parts of Iran, they will remain in Iran until the situation has been elucidated.' This last phrase implied that the troops would remain until Soviet demands upon Iran for political and economic concessions had been met. Ghavam thereupon cabled the Iranian ambassador in Washington, Hussein Ala, to announce that the Soviet government had not complied with its treaty obligations. Actually there were no indications of preparations for departure on the part of Soviet forces, and, meantime, the 'autonomous' government of Azerbaijan was steadily strengthening its power with local levies armed and equipped by the Russians with material, much of which had been manufactured in the Iranian government arsenals and taken by Soviet Russia during the occupation for use in the war against Germany.

#### *United States' Representations*

On 7 March, therefore, the United States formally addressed Soviet Russia, requesting that Soviet troops in Iran be withdrawn. At the same time a parliamentary crisis occurred in Iran. The term of the 14th Majlis was about to expire, but by law the expiration could be postponed pending an election. Mass demonstrations before the parliament building now took place under Tudeh auspices, with such violence that the Majlis was prevented from convening and passing the legislation necessary to extend its life; on 11 March the session expired, and the premier became in effect a dictator under his interim powers. The purpose of this maneuver is not clear, except by the interpretation that the Soviet government expected that it would find dealing with Ghavam easier than dealing with the Majlis, and that perhaps Ghavam preferred to see the Majlis expire, in order to have a freer hand in deal-

ing with the crisis. In any case, it is of interest to note that Ghavam, who had left Moscow, arrived in Baku on 10 March, but deferred his return to Teheran until 11 March, after the Majlis had been intimidated from sitting, and had expired.

Upon the expiration of the Majlis, Soviet troop movements in Iran began to assume alarming proportions, apparently with the purpose of forcing a *coup d'état* in Iran. The American government announced on 12 March:

The Department of State has received reports to the effect that during the last week additional Soviet armed forces and heavy military combat equipment have been moving southward from the direction of the Soviet frontier through Tabriz toward Teheran and toward the western border of Iran. This Government has enquired of the Soviet Government whether such movements have taken place, and, if so, the reasons therefor.

No reply was received to the note of 7 March.

#### C. APPEAL TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On 19 March, the Iranian government again made an appeal to the Security Council of the United Nations, to meet in New York on 25 March. There now began a series of maneuvers before that body. The Soviet delegate, Andrei Gromyko, proposed that the meeting of the Council be deferred until 10 April on the ground that negotiations were still proceeding between Soviet Russia and Iran, but upon the protest of the American delegate, Edward R. Stettinius, no action to defer was taken. On the eve of the meeting, 24 March, the Soviet government announced that an agreement had been reached with Iran by which evacuation of troops would be completed within six weeks, or by 6 May, and at the meeting of the Council, on 26 March, the Soviet delegate formally moved that the Iranian plea be taken from the agenda. This was voted down after extended debate, and on the following day the Council received a statement from the Iranian representative, Hussein Ala, the Iranian ambassador at Washington, summarizing the status of the negotiations that had been taking place between the two governments. This summary disclosed the

conditions that the Soviet government had been seeking to impose upon Iran as a price for peace:

(1) Soviet troops to continue to stay in some parts of Iran for an indefinite period.

(2) The Iranian government to recognize the autonomy of Azerbaijan.

(3) In lieu of a Soviet oil concession, an Irano-Soviet joint stock company to be set up with 51 per cent of the shares to be held by the Soviet government.

The Iranian representative, Ala, ended his statement with a formal denial that any negotiations had been concluded, or an agreement reached, between Soviet Russia and Iran, as had been announced by Moscow.

As a result of this statement, the Security Council, on 29 March, called on the Soviet and Iranian governments to advise the Security Council not later than 3 April (a) as to the actual state of negotiations between the two governments, and (b) whether the reported withdrawal of Soviet forces from Iran was conditional upon agreements regarding other subjects.

Considerable doubt existed whether the Soviet government would respond to this request, for its delegate had ceremoniously walked out of the Council meeting at its 27 March meeting when the Council voted to hear the Iranian representative. However, shortly before the Council convened on 3 April, the secretary general, Trygve Lie, was handed a communication from that government stating that the withdrawal of Soviet troops had begun 24 March and would be completed within a month and a half, and that the other questions between the two governments were not connected with the question of withdrawal, as the question of the oil concession had been raised in 1944 independently of the evacuation question.

The Iranian reply stated that Soviet interference in its internal affairs was continuing, and further that the Soviet government had presented three memorandums on 24 March, the first of which dealt with the withdrawal of troops, the second with a joint stock company for the extraction of oil, and the third with autonomy for Azerbaijan. It added that on 27 March the Soviet ambassador had declared orally that if agreement were reached on the second and third subjects, 'no un-

forseen circumstances' would arise in connection with the evacuation of troops.

As a result of these statements, the Security Council adopted a motion postponing until 6 May further consideration of the Iranian case.

### *Soviet Attempts to Quiet Discussion*

Almost coincident with this action, on 5 April, a joint communique was issued from Teheran by the Iranian premier and the Soviet ambassador announcing a conclusion of negotiations between the two governments and a 'complete agreement on all points.' The agreements were to the effect that (a) Soviet forces would evacuate all Iranian territory within one and a half months from 24 March; (b) an agreement for a joint Irano-Soviet oil company and its terms would be submitted to the Majlis for approval within seven months after 24 March; and (c) the Azerbaijan question, being an internal matter, would be settled between the government and the people of Azerbaijan, in accordance with existing laws and in a benevolent spirit towards the people of Azerbaijan.

The Soviet delegate to the Security Council now demanded that the Council formally dismiss the appeal of Iran, on the strength of the agreements reached, and attacked the legality of the proceedings. The Iranian representative announced, however, that his government wished the matter to remain on the agenda, and in consequence the Soviet move was rejected by the Council.

The Soviet government now placed heavy pressure on the Iranian government to withdraw its case from the Council. Soviet troop movements increased, without evidence of withdrawal, and the 'autonomous' government of Azerbaijan began to move troops in the direction of the capital. Until then, the government had avoided any armed clashes between its forces and the forces of the 'autonomous' government in Tabriz, but fighting in various localities now developed. As a result, Ala was instructed on 15 April to advise the Council that 'the Iranian government has no doubt that this agreement [regarding troop withdrawals] will be carried out,' but added significantly, 'but at the same time has not the right to fix the course which the Security Council should take.'

*Action of Security Council*

The Council again rejected the Soviet move to take the Iranian case from the agenda. On 7 May, the Council assembled to hear the reports of the two governments regarding the fulfillment of the agreement. The Soviet government ignored the Council by making no reply. The Iranian representative advised the Council that certain evacuations had occurred but that his government was still unable to exercise its authority in Azerbaijan and could not ascertain whether the province had actually been evacuated or not.

The Council now voted, with the Soviet delegate absenting himself, to defer until 20 May further consideration of the Iranian case, and requested the Iranian government to submit at that time a further report of the status of the situation.

Soviet pressure on Iran was now further increased, and press dispatches told of armed clashes between government troops and troops of the Azerbaijan 'autonomous' government. Nevertheless, the Iranian government resisted this pressure and advised the Council on 20 May that it was still unable to exercise any effective authority in Azerbaijan and was unable to confirm the withdrawal of Soviet forces.

The following day, however, Ala announced, on instructions from his government, that the Soviet forces had presumably evacuated certain points in Iran on 6 May, and the Soviet government, while continuing to ignore the Council, issued a press release announcing that the evacuation had been completed by 9 May.

The Security Council still declined, however, to remove the matter from the agenda. The Iranian government, under Soviet pressure, now formally requested the Security Council to remove its appeal from the agenda. After extended debate in the Council whether its authority to consider an appeal could be abrogated by the withdrawal of the appeal, the Council concluded that its authority continued, and declined to remove the matter from the agenda.

There the question rested. It appeared that Soviet troops did actually evacuate Iran, but left a number of Soviet personnel behind in civilian clothes, estimated at 2,500 to 3,000, to aid the 'autonomous' government of Azerbaijan, and also left



considerable quantities of war material by which the Azerbaijan government was able to continue to defy the Iranian government.

The evacuation, however, substantially lessened the tension; negotiations were entered into between the government and the representatives of Azerbaijan, and in June, an agreement was concluded whereby the 'autonomous' government was dissolved and Azerbaijan was reincorporated into the structure of the Iranian state, but with a grant of considerable powers of local administration and tax collection.

#### D. AFTERMATH

This agreement remained without effect, however, and the Iranian government was without authority in the area until about the middle of December, largely because of Soviet support of the Azerbaijan government, when the course of events elsewhere produced apparent changes in Soviet policy. American opinion had gradually been growing restive over the aggressive diplomacy of Soviet Russia and the intransigence manifested towards American views regarding the peace settlements, and as the result of various irritating or threatening acts on the part of the puppet governments that Soviet Russia had established in Central Europe. This opinion hardened in August when an ultimatum was sent to Yugoslavia over the shooting down of American planes that inadvertently had flown over Yugoslav territory. World opinion coalesced behind the American position. The American government announced that American naval contingents would be maintained in Mediterranean waters and visits of American war vessels to Mediterranean ports became more frequent.

At the same time Great Britain instituted a more active diplomacy in southern Iran. When Tudeh-inspired strikes threatened in July to obstruct operations of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, a counter-movement developed, and in resultant fighting some seventeen persons were killed and one hundred fifty persons were wounded. The Iranian government dispatched forces and brought the situation under control by expelling the Tudeh leaders.

In September occurred a revolt of the Kashgais and other

tribesmen in the south. Shiraz and the port of Bushire were captured, and autonomy for the southern provinces similar to that accorded to Azerbaijan was demanded. The Soviet *Tass* charged that this revolt was fomented by the British and conducted with aid of British arms supplied to the tribes. It may have been that this revolt was engineered as a warning to Soviet Russia of the consequences of a policy of dismembering Iran, for the revolt subsided after some small fighting and considerable negotiating, with the result that the government's authority was restored in the south and, in exchange, a cabinet reorganization occurred in which Tudeh members of Premier Ghavam's government were displaced. The southern provinces were also guaranteed a larger degree of self-government.

Soviet Russia had continued to urge execution of the oil concession, but on 2 October, Ghavam was reported to have rejected a Soviet proposal for a provisional grant. However, shortly thereafter, Ghavam announced that elections to the new Majlis would begin on 7 December, and subsequently declared the intention of the government to send troops to Azerbaijan to supervise the elections. The determination to send troops to Azerbaijan seems to have been at the insistence of the Shah, who demanded that the government take a firmer stand against Soviet imperialism. The Azerbaijan government threatened warfare if central government troops crossed the provincial border.

On 23 October, the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations convened in New York, and on 4 November, the Council of Foreign Ministers. At these meetings the differences between Soviet Russia on the one hand and Great Britain and the United States on the other became more accentuated. For weeks the question of the statute of Trieste was argued, and it appeared that all hope of international agreement was foredoomed over this issue. And then, dramatically, in the week of 25 November, there came a series of Russian concessions.

Soviet Russia acceded to American and British views on Trieste, and this was followed by Soviet concessions regarding freedom of navigation of the Danube. The Soviet government also indicated a conciliatory attitude towards questions of disarmament and atomic control, and on other issues.

The reasons for this reversal of policy were not clear at the time, and were variously attributed to the state of Premier Stalin's health and concern in Russia over the succession, to unrest in the Ukraine, and to recognition of the loss of world influence produced by Soviet foreign policy.

Whatever the reasons, the effects were promptly felt in Teheran. Despite a warning from the Soviet ambassador that the Soviet government could not countenance disturbances along its frontier, the Iranian government undertook to execute its decision to send troops to Azerbaijan. The moment the Iranian government troops crossed the borders of Azerbaijan on 10 December, the resistance of the Azerbaijan government melted, and on 11 December, the Iranian government troops, to the accompaniment of celebrations throughout the city, entered Tabriz.<sup>2</sup> Pishevari, leader of the Azerbaijan autonomous movement, fled to Russia. All Iran was united again under the sovereignty that emanated from Teheran.

Following these events, Soviet political activity in Iran subsided, and Iranian nationalism reasserted itself. The Tudeh party was driven underground, elections to the new Majlis were called and finally held in 1947, and the government showed increasing indifference to the question of an oil concession to Soviet Russia. Additional American military advisers were engaged, and the purchase of quantities of American surplus war materials was negotiated. An ambitious program of national rehabilitation was projected, involving a large loan for economic undertakings from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and an American engineering firm was engaged to draw up plans.

Meantime, despite the retreat in Iran, it soon became apparent that Soviet foreign policy had not changed but was more and more directed towards implementing the will of Peter the Great, by enlarging its hegemony or influence on

<sup>2</sup> The story, obtained from authoritative sources, is that Salamullah Djavid, governor general of 'autonomous' Azerbaijan, realizing the lack of popular support for the regime, secretly telegraphed to Teheran the surrender of his government. This telegram arrived about two hours before the Soviet ambassador called on the Shah to warn him of the consequences should warfare break out along the Soviet frontier. The Shah was able to assure the Soviet ambassador, much to that official's consternation, that the occupation of Azerbaijan would occur without disturbances.

all its frontiers. This became evident, as 1947 advanced, in Soviet unwillingness to reach peace settlements in Europe and the Far East, in its efforts to hamper the economic reconstruction of Western Europe, in the various political revolutions it engineered in Central Europe, and in its maneuvering to overthrow the independent Greek government.

Whether, or how long, Iran will be able to pursue its independent existence without molestation by its northern neighbor remains, therefore, in the words of Abol Qasim Lahuti, one of the secrets 'locked in the Kremlin.' Much will depend upon the force of the international will to peace; much more, upon the vitality the Iranian national spirit can demonstrate, the success of the government in purifying and elevating standards of administration, and the degree to which the Iranian people accept the moral requirements of independent existence.



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